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Land Without Shade



HANS HELFRITZ

# Land Without Shade



*Translated from the German  
by Kenneth Kirkness*

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## Introduction

ARABIA is still one of the least known parts of the earth. The statement is all the more surprising since it lies at the threshold of Europe, and some of the most-frequented navigation routes pass its shores. Moreover, it is known that ancient civilisations have flourished on Arabian soil, and to follow in their tracks and unveil their hidden treasures should have proved as attractive as exploration in Egypt or Babylonia. Two factors explain why this has been true only to a very minor degree, and why Arabia has stayed an almost unknown land.

After the great drawn battles between Christendom and the Arab-Islamitic world, at the time of the Crusades, Arabia disappeared from the European horizon. The birthplace of Islam sank into oblivion. Forgotten were the important influences which Arabian culture exercised on the spiritual development of the Occident at the beginning of the Middle Ages and, more particularly, during the period of hostilities.

Arabia herself, who had taken a prominent place in world affairs for many centuries, made no more history. She disappeared from the world stage and became a remote and neglected part of the Ottoman Empire. The

holy cities of Mecca and Medina were almost forgotten. Seldom did news of this land reach Europe. At the most, the newspapers occasionally referred to the fact that the last great Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid, had banished some inconvenient dignitary to Arabia, or that one of the Turkish officers who had undergone a course of military training in Germany had been sent to "Yemen" to be cured of his sympathy for western reforms.

Arabia seemed to have faded away. She had no part in the events which interested the rest of the world. Time passed by her. No political sensation, such as the construction of the Bagdad railway in Mesopotamia or the events in Egypt, ever drew the eyes of the world to the peninsula which had once possessed such fateful significance to the West.

The second reason for the lack of exploration in Arabia is to be found in the almost insurmountable difficulties which the would-be explorer has to meet. The first of these are of the natural kind. Beyond the coastal mountains of Arabia there are great deserts and barren steppes. The crossing of these more or less arid stretches, which often extend for distances of four or five hundred miles, is an extremely difficult matter and can only succeed with the co-operation or, at least, with the friendly toleration of the native inhabitants. And the absence of toleration is the greatest of all obstacles. Man can overcome the hostility of Nature, as expeditions to the Polar regions have shown, but against the enmity of his fellow men he is frequently powerless. In the case of Arabia antagonism may be attributed to two causes. The first of these proceeds from the social ethics of the lord and master of the deserts and steppes, the Bedouin, who recognizes no moral obli-

gations other than those which he owes to his own tribe. All who do not share the narrow bonds of blood are enemies; and where enemies are concerned the principle that might is right becomes the sole law. Consequently, robbery and violence against the members of other tribes are not only allowed, but are desirable and recognized maxims in the battle for existence.

The foreigner is naturally involved by this law of the desert. But in his case he is at an even greater disadvantage, since he lacks the protection and support of a tribe. To feel quite safe in his expeditions into the interior he would be obliged to travel in the midst of a small army. But the rulers of the country would obviously not permit this, and there are innumerable other factors which render this course impossible.

The hate which an Arab bears for the foreigner has another, more profound cause. It is rooted in a matter which rules the Arab's whole life: his religion. Mohammedanism is highly exclusive; one might almost describe it as inspired by passive fanaticism. Before the infidel (a term applied to anyone who does not belong to the community of Allah) the Moslem shrinks back, declining to regard him as a worthy creation of God; he looks upon him with aversion and mistrust; he will have nothing to do with him; he resents his intrusion on his thoughts and sentiments; he opposes his access to Mohammedan places of worship, at least to those places where Mohammedanism is preserved in its strict and genuine form, as is the case in the land of its origin, Arabia. Mohammedanism, which, spiritually, has much in common with Christianity, is probably the only religion in the world which threatens

death to one who holds another faith, should he be unwise enough to enter one of its places of worship.

And that which applies to the mosques is behind the principles which govern the behaviour of all inhabitants of the country. The foreigner seems to be in an invisible, elastic wall, which encloses him and yet eludes his grasp. He meets with veiled opposition everywhere; every movement, every action is jealously watched. If he makes an entry in his notebook, or if he sketches an inscription of pre-Mohammedan times, suspicions are quickly excited. And once mistrust has been aroused, passive aversion speedily changes into active and violent hatred. In this connection it should be mentioned that the hostility of Mohammedan Arabia has by no means diminished in recent years; on the contrary it has grown, and in many cases has become a recognized defence against western influence. Several references to this fact are made in the pages which follow.

For these reasons a few bold pioneers of Science alone have succeeded in penetrating to the interior of the Arabian peninsula, many hundreds of thousands of square miles of which remain unexplored to this day.

With a new era in world history, the beginning of which was marked by the shots which killed the Archduke at Serajevo, there came a change. For the first time since the Crusades European armies fought on Arabian soil, and were brought into direct contact with that eastern world. More important still, Arabia was suddenly restored to a place in world history. In the big melting-pot of the World War she was aroused from her apathy and plunged into a stream of development, the end of which is not yet in sight. The silence which surrounded her was

broken. The journals and periodicals which acquaint the public with world happenings appeared with regular, full reports of Arabia, and proved the growth of interest in, and importance of, the peninsula.

What is there particularly significant about this Arabian renaissance? In the first place, it becomes evident that after a long period of rest the Arab peoples have gathered new strength. The deserts and steppes of the interior, depopulated by the expeditions of the first Caliphs, have, in the course of the last thirteen centuries, been gradually re-peopled. When the curtains were drawn aside and the eastern world was set in motion, there appeared a people strong enough to establish a claim to their own existence.

Secondly, Mohammedanism experienced an unexpected revival. After the collapse of the Turkish Caliphate, it gravitated once more to the land of its origin, the Arabian interior, and won new life in the process. It found in Ibn Saud, the ruler of Central Arabia, a new champion. Whereas, in most other countries, the distinction between Church and State became more and more pronounced, the union between God and World in the newly forming Arabia was fully preserved; religion became more than ever the great force in community life and the foundation upon which the State was being built.

It is still impossible to tell whither these strange and mysterious forces lead and what effects they will have. One thing, though, is certain: The revival of the doctrines of the Prophet and all that they imply to the Arab mean estrangement from the Occident. As in many other parts of the world, there is in Arabia a concentration of forces against Europe. In his book *Weltwende*, Hermann Stegemann, one of the keenest observers of the day, writes:

"The Islam which is also being produced in the blast-furnace of Arabia is taking the form of a mighty Asiatic offensive."

The descriptions in this book are of Southern Arabia, of that part of the peninsula most favoured by Nature and most historically remarkable. It is the land from which we were told that the "Three Kings of the East" came to pay tribute to the new-born Saviour of the world, and where, too, the Queen of Sheba was said to have reigned.

For a long time little was known of this remote land of the East. It had sunk behind a mist of legends and fabulous stories. It was not until the 'Eighties that a German traveller, Edward Glaser, visited Yemen, the principal part of Southern Arabia, and collected a large number of ancient inscriptions. Then it was realized that the strange stories of the Bible were founded on facts, that mighty kingdoms had once flourished there, and that an astonishingly high state of civilisation had been achieved by the people of Sheba and their successors.

These inscriptions remained the only things of importance which were discovered. The darkness with which the events of the past were covered in Southern Arabia had still to be illuminated.

Even to-day Yemen is a land whose doors are practically closed to outsiders. The Priest-King Yahya, a descendant of the Prophet, is its ruler. Completely distrusting the Occident, he is determined to guard his kingdom from western influence, and he forbids the foreigner entrance save by his personal consent, given usually only when economic or diplomatic considerations render it desirable. And even one who is admitted by the royal will

is not at liberty to move as he pleases. The route which he has to follow and the places at which he has to stop are exactly specified, and he remains the whole time under surveillance. On principle, the King only allows foreigners to proceed as far as his capital, San'a. The rest of the realm is forbidden land—while parts of Yemen are totally unexplored and are supposed to guard the rich remains of a past civilisation. The King's efforts to close Yemen to the outside world receive the active support of the hostile population, strengthened by religious fanaticism and the precarious state of the country.

Exploration of little-known Yemen with its great past and its still unspoiled originality may well be an enticing goal. Many on the threshold of discoveries have had to turn back with empty hands; others have fallen victims to the perils of the undertaking.

Hans Helfritz is one of the few whose indomitable courage and unshakable perseverance have enabled him to pierce the barrier and enter the forbidden land. And he succeeded only as the result of almost unbelievable risks and daring.

Helfritz began his travels in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia, where he familiarized himself with the Arabian language and Arab customs. He then made the acquaintance of an Arab sultan who reigns over a small district in the south-east part of the peninsula. As this sultan's guest he went to Makalla, at the side of the Indian Ocean. From this point he ventured to Hadramaut, a tract of country lying immediately beyond the coastal mountains, adjoining Yemen. His first exploration in Southern Arabia, in which he chanced upon old skyscraper cities, is described in the first part of this book, *Chicago of the*



*Desert.* During his stay in Hadramaut he gained experiences and made friendships which were of great service to his subsequent, greater undertaking.

The goal which from the very commencement he had set himself was Yemen, the forbidden land. He set out again, landed at Hodeida, the harbour city of Yemen, and knocked at the door of the aloof kingdom. He was in luck, the door opened to him, and he was permitted to visit the capital, San'a, where he stayed for a considerable time. But all efforts to advance further into the country failed. The King would not allow it. Helfritz had to retrace his steps and return home.

Nevertheless, he did not allow this reverse to deter him. A year later he was again on his way to Southern Arabia. Finding that official permission was not forthcoming, he made the resolve to enter Yemen secretly. But, as earlier travellers had found to their cost, he learned that this could not be achieved by starting from one of the coastal towns. He therefore planned to cross the Yemen frontier by making a detour through the interior of Southern Arabia. This made necessary the crossing, hitherto held to be impracticable, of a desert area which extends over the whole of the eastern part of the peninsula and is a blank patch on the map of Arabia.

This is not the place for a more detailed description. How Helfritz overcame the many difficulties; how he proceeded from adventure to adventure; how he gained the forbidden land after incredible hardships; and what happened to him when he arrived there—all this he relates in the pages which follow.

Helfritz' discoveries have won for him a place in the front rank of German explorers. He is among those who

have shown that the pioneer spirit is still alive in the Germany of to-day; that the will to venture abroad in the interests of Science is still active; that no sacrifice is too great when this great objective may be served. Worthy of mention is the fact that he received no support in official quarters, and, indeed, in the circumstances no such support could have been given him. He went alone, on his own responsibility, furnished with very slender financial means, which his lectures and former publications had brought him, and unarmed, though well-equipped with the peaceful accessories of modern exploration: the film camera and a sound-recording apparatus. A rich spoil of documents and information about the people of the country and their works, the landscape, art and architecture, everyday life and the dances and music of the Arabs is the splendid result of his travels.

It seems not inappropriate to make brief reference to the events which recently happened in Yemen, events which may well have important political consequences.

After the successful western powers had made sure of their shares of the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, there remained two completely independent rulers in Arabia: Ibn Saud in the centre of the peninsula and the Imâm Yahya, the King of Yemen, in the south. Both endeavoured to extend as far as possible the ill-defined frontiers of their respective realms. Ibn Saud was the luckier. He took possession of the holy cities, drove off King Hussein of Hedshas, an English protégé, reached out to the south and occupied the former Sultanate of Assir, in the immediate neighbourhood of Yemen, a province to which the Imâm Yahya also laid claim.

The many squabbles which resulted were the outward expression of the secret rivalry between the two rulers. The two countries energetically increased their armaments, whereby they had the eager support of foreign contractors of military equipment. In 1933 an abortive attempt was made to settle the dispute by treaty. Its failure left the decision to the sword.

It was soon at work. Open warfare which began in the spring of 1934 developed unfavourably to the Imâm. Troops commanded by the Crown Prince of Yemen were beaten by Ibn Saud's warriors, who invaded the harbour city of Hodeida and occupied the coastal territory. The fate of Yemen appeared sealed. The Press reported that the Imâm had been deposed, later that he had been assassinated, and that his country had been annexed to Ibn Saud's kingdom.

It was then that the world was surprised by the news of a peace treaty which was concluded at Taif, a city lying in a fine oasis not far from Mecca. That was in June, 1934. From the treaty it was evident that the preceding hostilities had merely been a step in the direction of Arab unity. The independence of Yemen was in no way impaired, and the occupied areas were evacuated. However, Ibn Saud became the owner of Assir. The two parties then contractually agreed that no further territorial claims existed between them.

More important, though, was the pact, binding for a period of twenty years, of "Mohammedan friendship and Arab brotherhood," which was included in the peace treaty. Both states—and this is a point of great importance—recognized that they belonged to the same race and

undertook to "further the well-being, peace and security of this united nation."

This marked the formation of a united front in the Arabian peninsula against foreign aggression. The peace treaty, moreover, signalled an advance in the direction of the long-desired unity of the country. After the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the successful states believed that they would be able to map the Near East according to their own wishes and ideas. Turkey was the first to rise up and strike through this account. Arabia is now beginning to follow suit. It is speedily being recognized that Ibn Saud is the powerful, central figure in a federation in the making. And his ultimate goal—of this there can be no doubt—is "Arabia for the Arabs."

DAGOBERT VON MIKUSCH



## BOOK ONE

### Chicago of the Desert



## I.

### A Visit to the Sultan of Makalla

THIS is a book about one of the last puzzling cultures of this world, one that has so far remained unmolested by the rising tide of our own civilisation.

It is a book which takes the reader into an unreal, uncanny land, encircled by deserts, in the south of the great Arabian peninsula.

It is a book which records the experiences of a journey to savage Bedouin tribes; to sultans and ancient Arab noble families; to a people of whom Americans and Europeans understand little enough; who follow ways different from those of the so-called civilized peoples, and who possess a culture as rich as that of the peoples of the Indies and the Far East. We err if we imagine that, nowadays, the earth is known to us in all its parts and that the poles, the inaccessible deserts and the primeval forests of Siberia and South America are all that are left to the explorer. The Arabian peninsula, which is twenty-seven times as large as New York State, contains many hundreds of thousands of square miles of unexplored territory. Known historically for three thousand years, Arabia, especially in the south, is largely unexplored and unseen, a forbidden land whose present state



of civilisation is similar to that which existed in the Middle Ages.

It is an ancient civilisation, wrapped in mystery which reaches back to the times of the people of Sheba.

Far inland, in the great deserts, I discovered ancient rock-drawings of animals, saw sculptures dedicated to the Moon-God Sense and, curiously enough, age-old forms of the Cross, the same characteristic form of the Cross that one is always meeting with in the East. Similar forms, incidentally, are also found in the aloof Libyan Desert and in that part of Northern Africa inhabited by the Tuaregs, embittered enemies of all Christians.

The people of Arabia are a mystery in themselves. They cling to their centuries-old heritage; their mode of living continues unchanged; their camels still tread the age-worn caravan routes, year in year out, which the people of Sheba, Roman merchants, Abyssinians and hordes of Bedouins have used in turn.

Southern Arabia, the most mysterious part of the whole of Arabia, still withstands foreign influence and stubbornly resists the intrusion of the European—and this resistance is justified. Politically Southern Arabia is not a united land: it contains a kingdom, a handful of sultanates and several small states, states of which I was as ignorant as most other people.

The first part of my book deals with a part of the country which is generally known by the name of Hadramaut and contains the cities with the high houses. It is the Chicago of the desert.

By pure chance I made the acquaintance of the Sultan Omar bin Awed al Kaiti who is the ruler of a small state

which includes the towns of Makalla and Sheshr, on the Indian Ocean. That was in July, 1931. I was in Berlin, at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to make inquiries into conditions in Southern Arabia. They told me that the Sultan of Makalla happened at the time to be travelling in Europe and that he was staying a few days in the Hotel Adlon.

"Go and see him. The Sultan can give you far better information than you are likely to get from us," was their advice to me.

The Sultan received me, interested himself in my plans, and invited me and my friend Jan Pomorski to pay a visit to his court. My journey to Southern Arabia was as good as started. Though I had no official permission to travel in the hinterland of Southern Arabia, I knew that the Sultan was in direct communication with the rulers of the various independent Arab states and that it was within his power to assist me.

The second meeting with the Sultan was at Aden, a peninsula situated in the Indian Ocean. It belongs to the British Empire. We embarked on a small steamer privately owned by a rich and respected Parsee, one Cowasjee Dinshaw, and on this vessel we went to Makalla. This Indian merchant alone maintains the coastal traffic between Aden and the harbour cities of Yemen, Sheshr and Makalla, Somaliland and the small ports on the East African coast as far as the Island of Zanzibar. In Aden there is a whole colony of Indian merchants; and Aden, being a free port, is a favourable center for business enterprises. The town is generally considered as the hottest on earth, but I do not agree with that: the Red Sea harbours are far hotter and on account of the humid air

hardly bearable. On the other hand Aden always seems to have a fresh sea breeze which carries a minimum of humidity, and the climate is healthy and free from malaria.

Aden, like Bombay, has its towers of silence and towers of death, where the Parsees expose corpses for the vultures to devour. A traveller on his way to the Far East, paying a short visit to Aden, would hardly notice them. One of these towers, guarded by savage dogs, is situated high up on the edge of the crater, in the hollow of which the Arab city still exists. When a Parsee dies the funeral procession halts at the foot of the hill, and two dogs, one black and one white, are released. If the white one reaches the corpse's side first, then the deceased will pass into Heaven; if the black dog is first, then he passes into the other place.

The city is surrounded by mountains; a wide gap revealing the blue sky communicates between the city proper and the harbour, Steamer Point, where our little boat, the "Velho," was anchored. When we arrived the Sultan's baggage, which consisted of many trunks and bales, not to mention a new motorcar, was being embarked under the care of one of his Indian servants. The steerage passengers, a horde of Arabs, many of whom were exceedingly rich men, were already on board and were a constant source of hindrance to the work of loading. They camped on deck or in one of the lower saloons—anywhere where there was room—and had brought their own provisions with them. A fire and drinking water were all that they demanded. A sail-cloth divided the first class deck into two: one half was reserved for the Sultan and the other for us, as the small cabins were out of the ques-

tion in the tropical heat. Actually we were made very comfortable on deck: the Sultan had his silk-covered divan while we had our camp-beds.

The Sultan and his suite came aboard early on the morning of October first (we had embarked the evening before) and our two days' journey to Makalla began. Keeping within view of the rocky shores of Southern Arabia we passed Ras el Kelb, an island bird sanctuary, which is not marked on any map that I have seen. Later we picked out the houses and palm plantations of Borum; and we reached our destination early on the morning of our third day out.

Makalla, a city of glistening whiteness, of extraordinary beauty, with its countless palaces and lofty towers, lies in a delightful bay close under the dark cliffs of the Jebel el Kara. It is the gateway to the province of Hadramaut.

It was Makalla's great day: The Sultan had returned from a long journey, and we were his guests. We remained for the time being on the ship which had come to anchor in the sun-baked harbour, and was in full gala rigout. Alarming, savage forms, in their houris (narrow canoes), came alongside, clambered on board like monkeys and noisily greeted their Sultan, who was receiving his ministers and sons on the bridge. We then entered a small motorboat, which was equipped with magnificent rugs and carpets, and made for the shore. An enormous crowd had assembled on the quay: semi-naked Bedouins and mountain folk with their long, coarse hair and their almost black skins resembled so many bandits, whom soldiers were endeavouring to hold in check. All the men over sixteen years of age wore richly inlaid dag-

gers at the waist. The first sight of this amazing spectacle and the sudden meeting with such a concourse of savage looking rascals so bewildered us that we hesitated to advance.

First of all there was the ceremony of welcoming the Sultan. A brass band began to play a number of stirring tunes (mostly Turkish marches, rendered with an ear-splitting din). The band was composed of musicians in red turbans and blue and red uniforms. The Sultan then inspected the guard of honour, which contained several Negro soldiers. The latter belonged to the soldier-slaves, of whom he possesses some five hundred.

The possession of slaves, male and female, is still customary in the coastal districts of Southern Arabia. In particular the populations of the harbour cities of Yemen and Hedshas contain a large proportion of people of negro blood. British patrol boats maintain a sharp lookout for slave traders, and steamers ramming a slave boat receive high rewards. But the Arab traders are not willing to let this deter them. They continue to import this profitable black "livestock" from Africa to Arabia, even if it means taking a somewhat circuituous route in order to land them safely. In their dows, as the Arabian sailing ships are called, the Arabs seem to have a preference for setting out for the Arabian coasts during the period of violent storms which occurs at the end of autumn. If a patrol boat is sighted the living cargo is simply dumped overboard and left to the mercy of sharks. Occasionally, when a shipment of blacks is captured, it is often impossible to restore the natives to their respective tribes and villages, as they themselves have not the faintest notion where these are situated. The prices of slaves

vary from \$12.00 to \$200.00. Somali Negroes and Abyssinians fetch \$125.00, while Nubians, who are the pick of the market, realize as much as \$195.00. Generally speaking, a slave is well treated and is fed and clothed, in return for which he has to work for his master. In some cases slaves have reached positions of honour, have become the valued advisers of their masters, ministers to sultans, and have actually been given authority over free men.

The Makalla ceremony proceeded.

Princes, Sayeds (nobles) and Ministers once more greeted the Sultan, this time before the eyes of the crowd. The form of greeting in Southern Arabia is curious; the two parties about to greet bend low, thrusting their heads toward each other, clasp hands (which they smell with a loud sniff), and then immediately withdraw them. This ceremony of smelling the hands has its origin in the belief that the Sayeds, or nobles, who are all direct descendants of Mohammed, exude an "odour of sanctity."

As the procession moved towards the inner city the women, who had collected on the housetops, maintained a curious singing in loud, shrill tones, such as are heard at wedding feasts and on other ceremonious occasions in all parts of Arabia. The crowd cheered Omar bin Awed al Kaiti, their Sultan, who had taken his place at the head of the colourful procession which wound its way through the narrow lanes leading to the Palace.

The Sultan's palace is built in Indian style—he himself drew up the plans of construction—and is situated near the sea. In the audience hall, which is furnished with valuable carpets, there are several chairs of European

pattern, but everyone follows the local custom which is to sit on the floor. On straw mats we found veritable mountains of rice, meat, muscatels, poultry, fish and flat loaves. The Sultan took his place at the "center of the table" before the other guests entered the room, and he then invited us to occupy the positions of honour at his side. He then personally distributed the meat on to the guests' plates, and they, the guests, had to help themselves to the other dishes. There were neither knives nor forks, eating being done with the right hand. In time you develop the knack of forming the incredibly hot rice with its various trimmings into artistic little balls, and if you are particularly skilful you manage it without burning your fingers. You are not allowed much time, for the Arabs consume an amazing amount of food in the briefest space of time. The meal had hardly begun and the whole company were sitting back and looking round to see how far the others had got. The Sultan then rose, and the meal was over. The servants—and they were many—then threw themselves on to the floor and began wolfing the remains.

The Sultan placed at our disposal an entire palace, a genuine, big, white, fairy-tale palace, in the middle of a fine park of palms and banana trees. We were even provided with servants and guards; a sultan worthy of the title does not leave his guests in the lurch. Soldiers at the gate and soldiers posted at the palace entrance saluted whenever we passed. We also had an escort of soldiers since apart from the Sultan few of the people here had ever seen a European, and the interest which we caused every time we appeared in the streets might otherwise have led us into awkward situations.

We had spent a week in the city. Entertainment followed entertainment, and the visits of princes, Ministers and Sayeds were never-ending. In Southern Arabia the male members of the leading princely families, those who trace their descent direct from the Prophet, bear the title Sayed or Sheriff. Among them is the family of Sayed al Kaff, the greatest and richest noble family in the whole of Southern Arabia. They are the virtual rulers of Hadramaut. They have tremendous commercial interests in Singapore and Java; they possess magnificent palaces in Makalla and Sheshr; from Terim, the capital of their province, they rule over the biggest and most important Bedouin tribes. They alone could authorize our journey to the aloof hinterland, which we had faint hopes of entering.



## II.

### History of an Unknown Land

THE small domain ruled over by Sultan Omar is the Sultanate of Sheshr and Makalla, deriving its name from the two most important harbours situated between Aden and Oman. The country, a small strip of coastal territory separating the sea from Hadramaut and the other inland states, has a recent history. At the present time there is some kind of political connection between the Sultan of Makalla's country and the old inland culture state, but the two provinces have always been distinct and separate.

The city of Makalla was founded in the year 1625 by Achmed bin Medyem al Kesadi, a sultan of the Yafei tribe, who are natives of the mountainous country north of Aden. This Sultan ruled the area lying between Borum and Makalla and several places in the interior, but his dominion did not extend as far as Sheshr. The latter city fell a prey to various marauding Bedouin tribes, and it was not until 1866 that Sultan Ghalib bin Mahsin al Katiri annexed the city of Sheshr and drove away the last representative of the Hamir tribes, a certain Ali bin Nagi, who is said to have died at the age of 120, at Lahedsh. But the Katiris, who are still important people

in Southern Arabia, were only to enjoy possession for six months. The Kaitis, who also are members of the Yafei tribe, joined forces with Sultan Nagib Selach al Kesadi of Makalla and conquered Sheshr towards the end of 1867, and it has stayed in the possession of the Kaiti reigning family ever since.

However, the rivalry which had always existed between Makalla and Sheshr became an open feud between the former allies. The conqueror of Sheshr had departed for Hyderabad in India, where he had formerly served in the Nizam's Arab Legion, with the rank of Jemadar, a title which his successors including the present Sultan continue to use. He grew rich in this service. The reclamation of a loan which the Jemadar had made to the Nagib and which the latter was in no position to repay was the signal for a war, conducted on land and sea, in which the Kaitis, despite their considerable wealth, failed at first to record much success. They accordingly placed themselves under British protection; and Britain who adopted the role of mediator was rejected by the Nagib. So, in 1881, a British warship steamed into the harbour, obliged him to surrender, and deported him with his entire court and large harem to the Island of Zanzibar. Even to-day there is a large colony of Southern Arabians in Zanzibar who maintain trade with their native country.

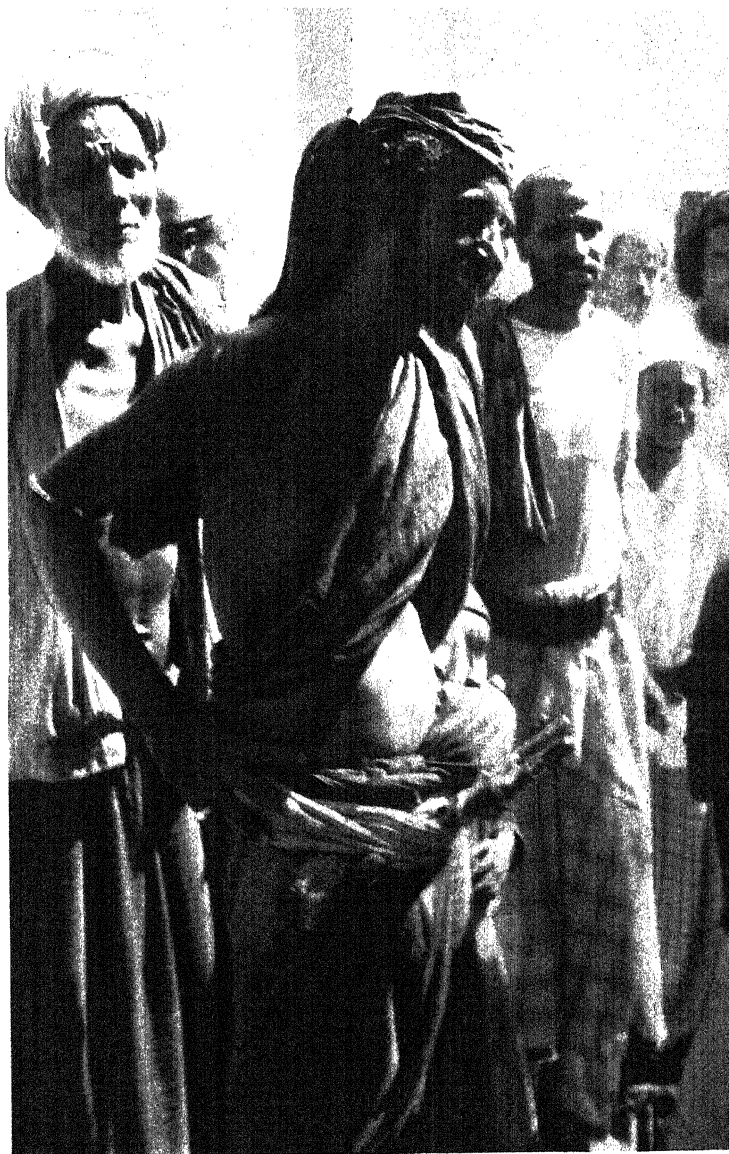
Having been put in ownership of Makalla the Kaitis soon turned their attention to Borum, which they annexed. The place is a natural harbour and a safe refuge for ships dodging the south-west monsoon. In the territory annexed are several smaller places which are administered by members of the family, all of whom bear

the title of Jemadar. Under England's protection they are secure from foreign invasion, and they receive money into the bargain. There is not a single Briton or other European in the Sheshr and Makalla "Government"; the Sultan rules entirely by himself, just as he thinks fit, and can actually permit himself a long absence from his country, so well established is his power. One reason for this is the fact that the rulers of inland states are obliged to land all goods which they import at the harbours of Makalla and Sheshr, and they are naturally anxious to keep on good terms with the Sultan.

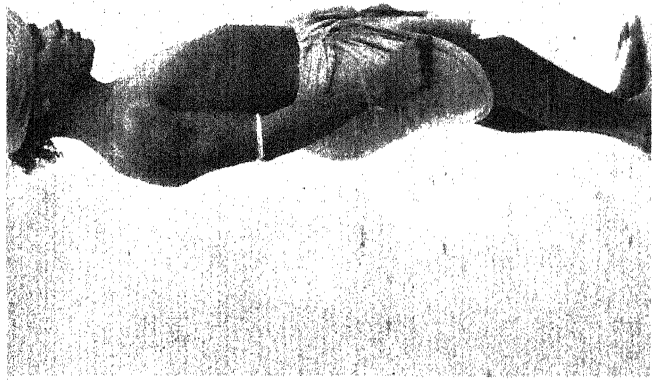
Few Europeans have attempted to penetrate inland from the Southern Arabian coast lying on the Indian Ocean. The first white men were the Portuguese who reached Southern Arabia during their colonizing excursions to India and occupied the whole of the coastal area from Aden to Maskat, as well as the mystery land Mahra. This land joins Sheshr and Makalla in the east and possesses its own language, the Mahra tongue, foreign to the Arabs. All along the coast the Portuguese established naval bases, fought with the Hamir tribe, and built forts whose remains the Arabs of to-day refer to as *Husun al Frengi* or *al Kafir*. They were able to hold their position in Southern Arabia for twenty-five years, but were driven from the country in the early sixteenth century. A fleet of twenty vessels whose task was to reconquer the lost territory went down in a severe storm.

Not a single Portuguese, however, reached the hinterland of Hadramaut. The difficulties to be met with in attempting to penetrate inland are mentioned in a book by Maltzan,<sup>1</sup> who points out that it is not easy

<sup>1</sup> Maltzan, *Reise nach Südarabien*, Brunswick, 1873.



*A group of Bedouins who greet us upon our arrival in Makalla. In the foreground is a laughing soldier of the Sultan.*



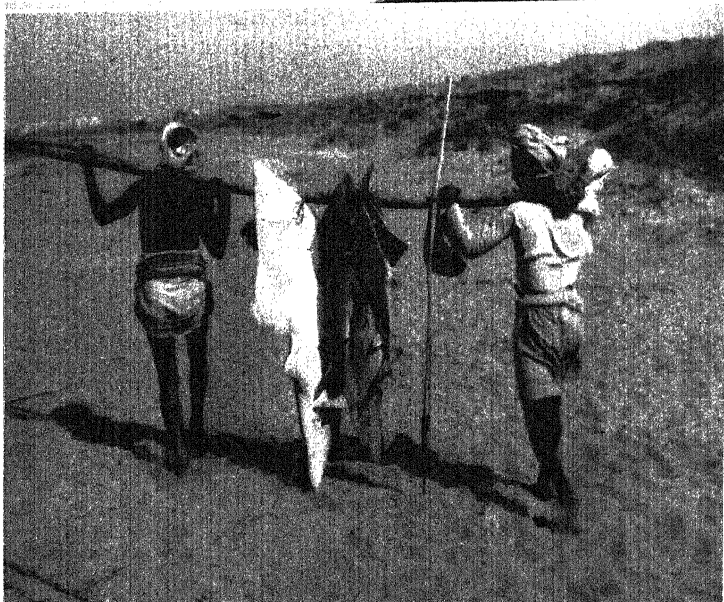
*Shoeless and shirtless, this Arab in Makalla yet clings to his headdress and arm bands.*



*Almost hidden by the wild and unkempt hair of this Hadramauti Bedouin is the face of a sensitive and gentle man.*

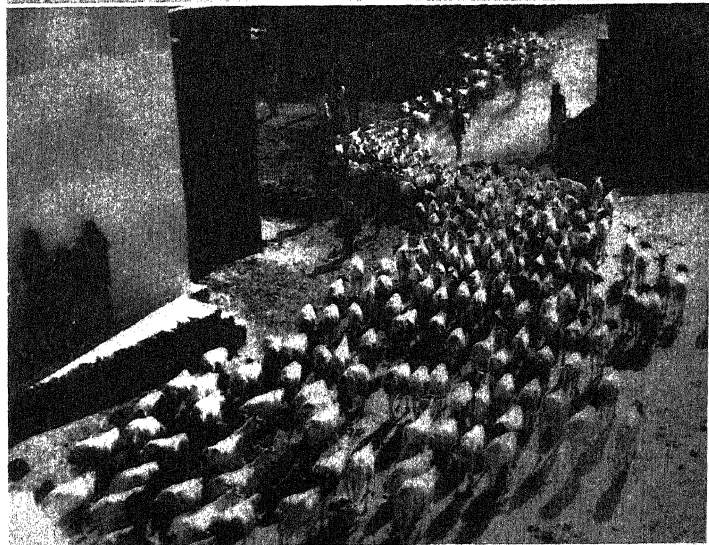
*Ancient Shibam, the oldest residential city in Hadramaut.*





Above) Natives and guests who wish to cross the river at Terim must pick careful path at this ford.

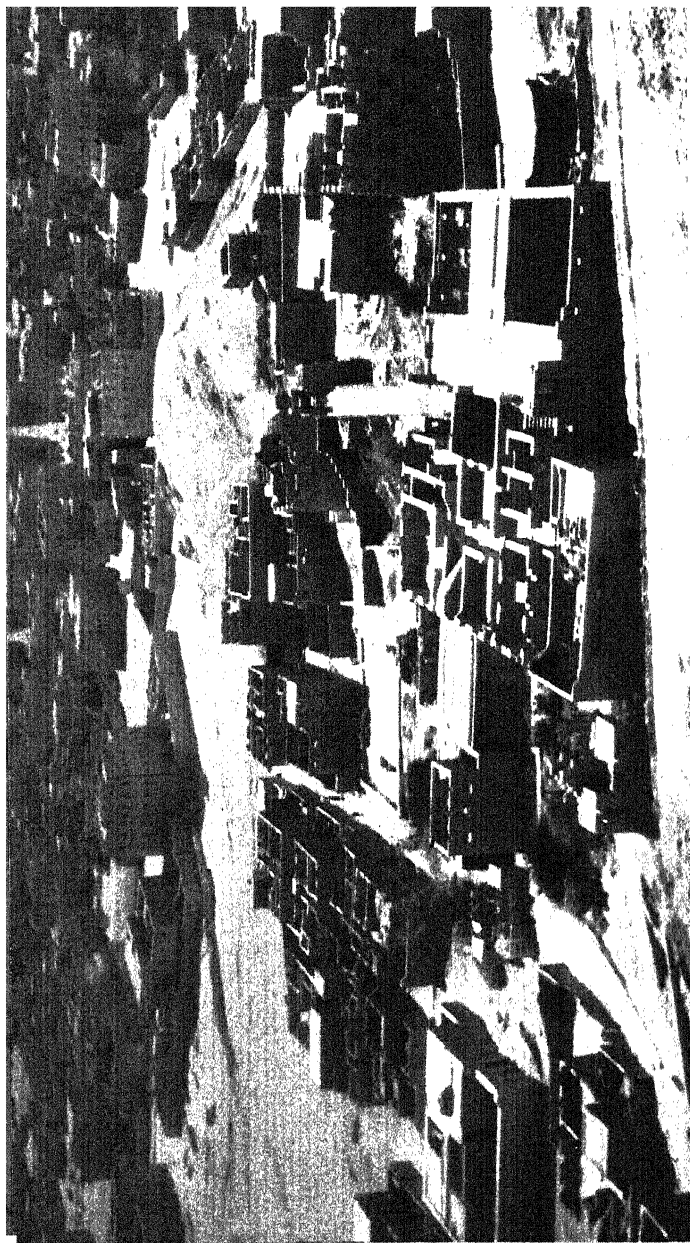
(Below) Where Peter earned his living before he left his nets to follow Christ. Two fishermen of the Red Sea and their catch.



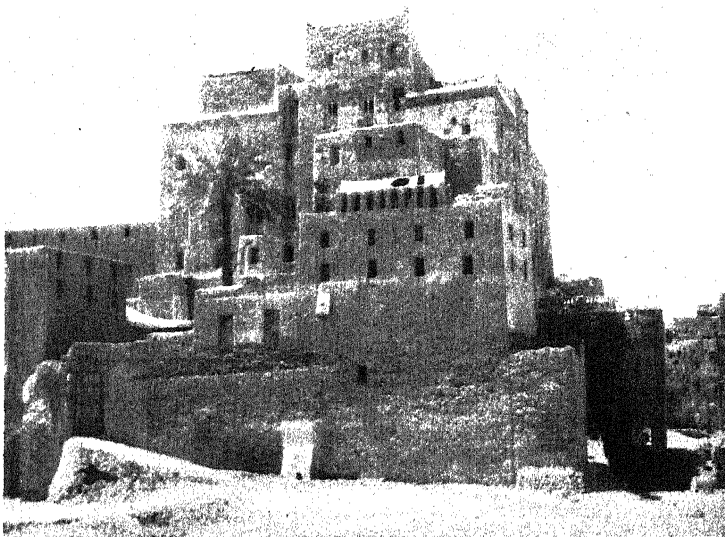
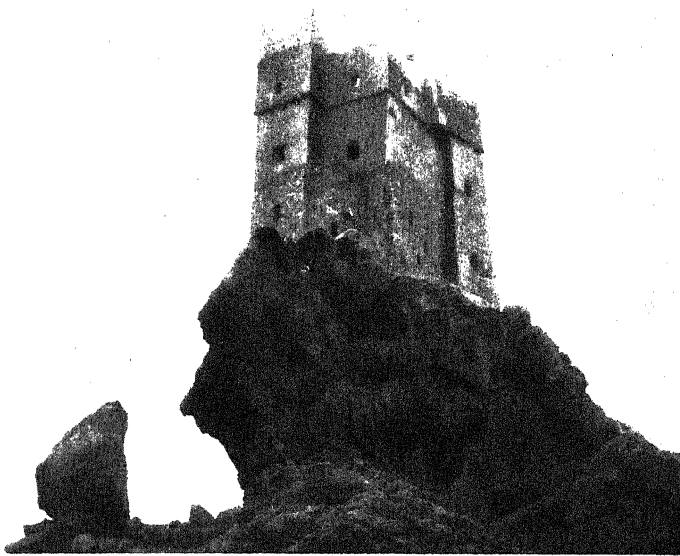
(Above) Arab children can sleep anywhere. Here are two of them resting on a street in Terim, the capital of Hadramaut.

(Below) But the children must waken up and get out of the way when flock of sheep comes to town.





*Looking down from the heights on Terim.*



*(Above) A fort in Makalla, which none but the brave would dare assault save with cannon.*

*(Below) A house of many rooms Terim.*

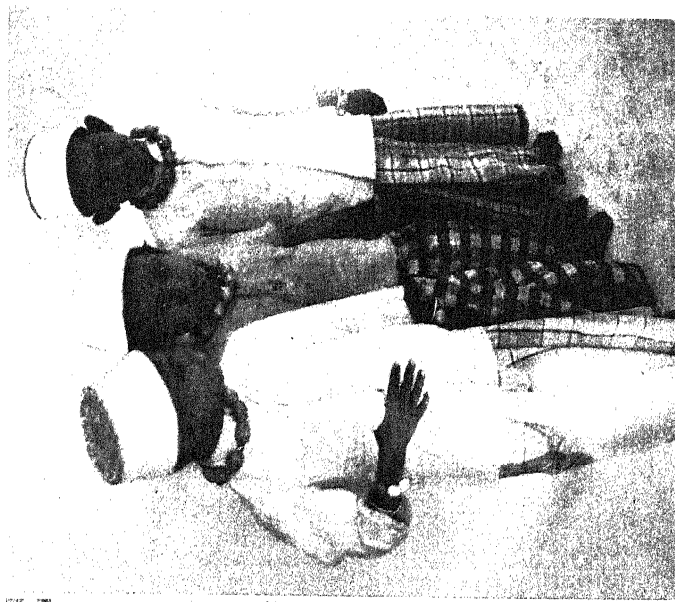


*Country women in Terim on their "day in town."*

*A country man at work in Hadramaut.*



*The sons of Al Kaff, a noble of Terim, look shyly at each other instead of at the camera.*

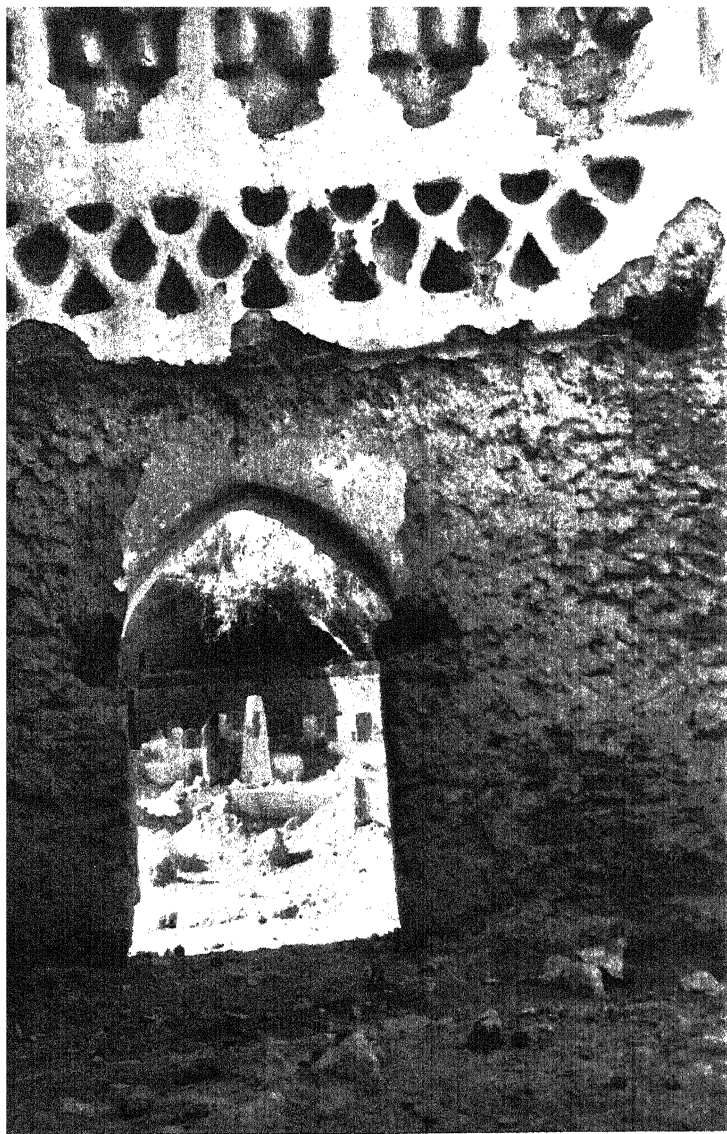




*Before Columbus discovered the country in which New York's skyscrapers now are, these buildings were constructed in Shibam.*

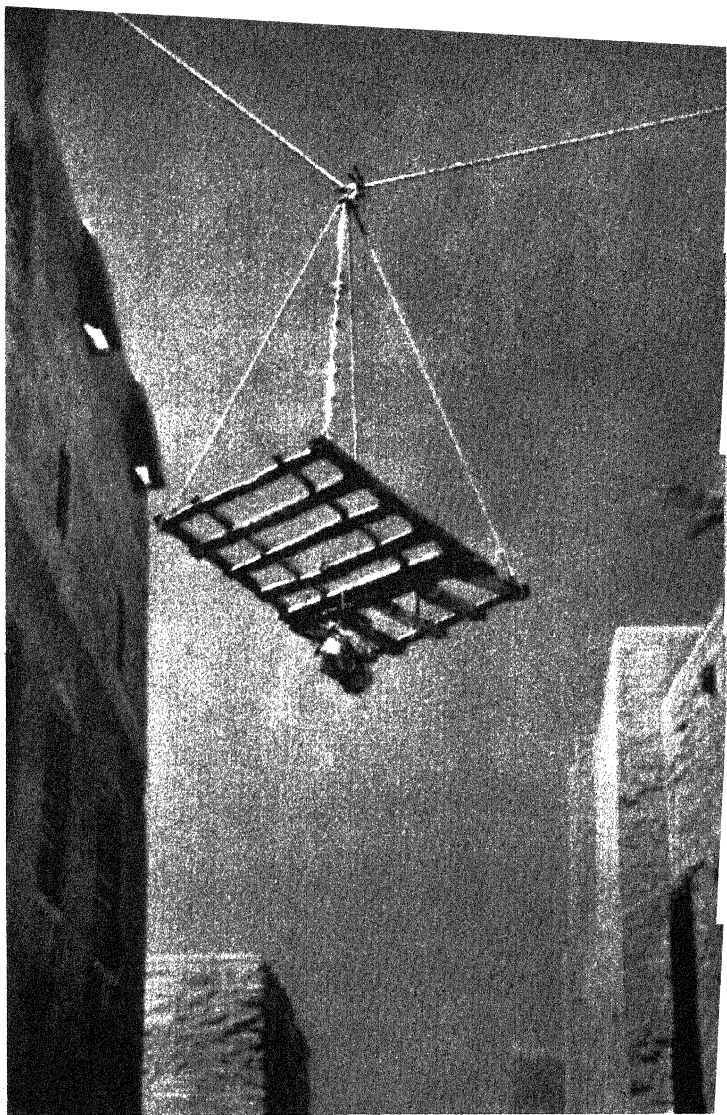


*A Bedouin boy not too well pleased to pose.*



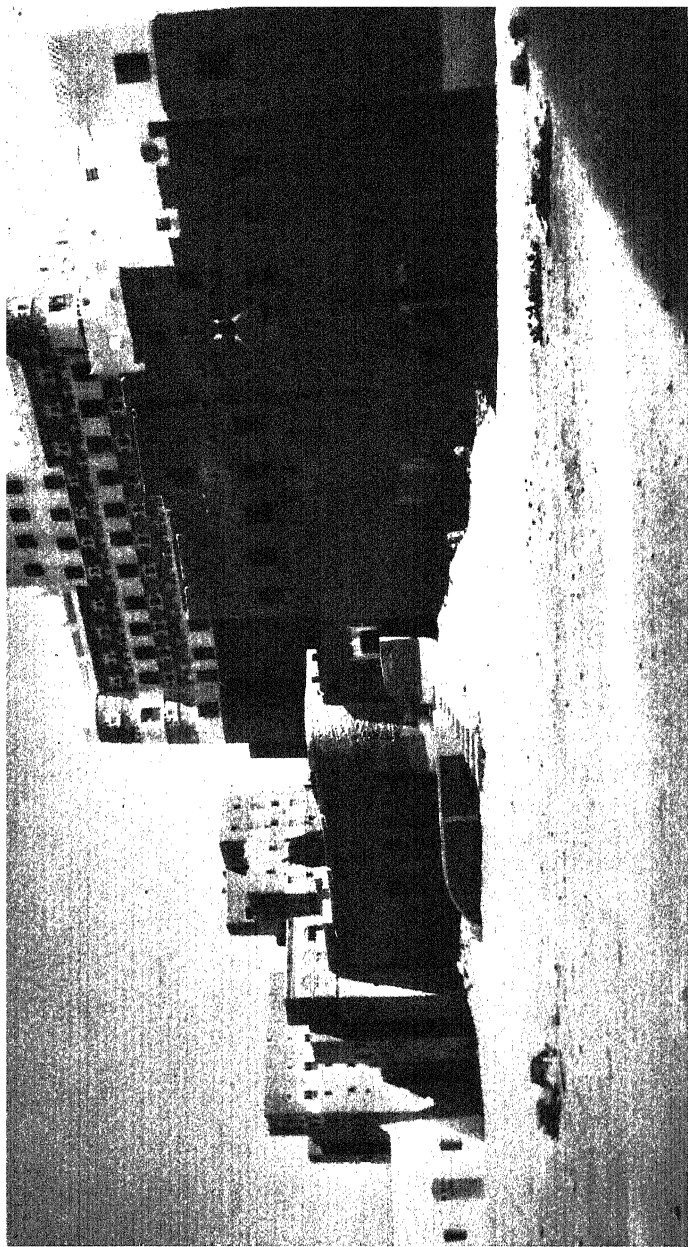
*Through this gate pass the dead of Makalla.  
The monuments in the Mohammedan cemetery  
are amazingly like those in Christian  
burial grounds in America.*



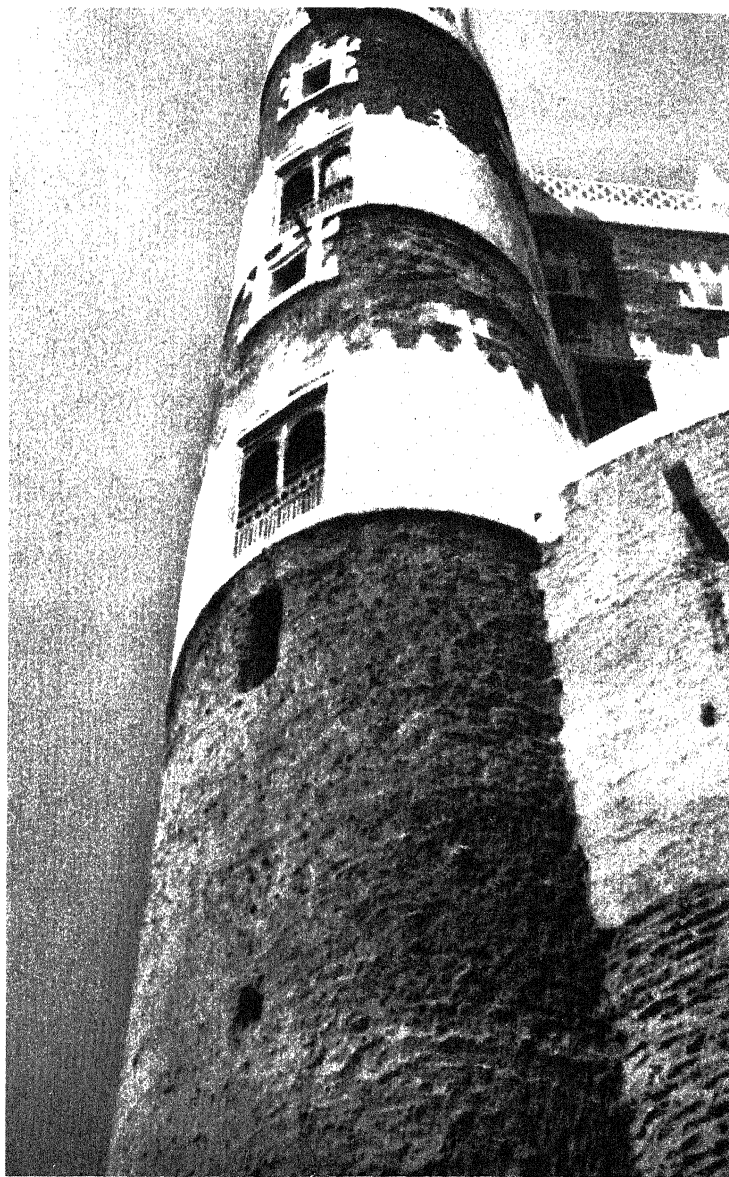


*Above the streets of Seyun these strange structures sway at dizzying heights. In Southern Arabia women keep chickens instead of dogs and the chickens roost on these platforms at night.*

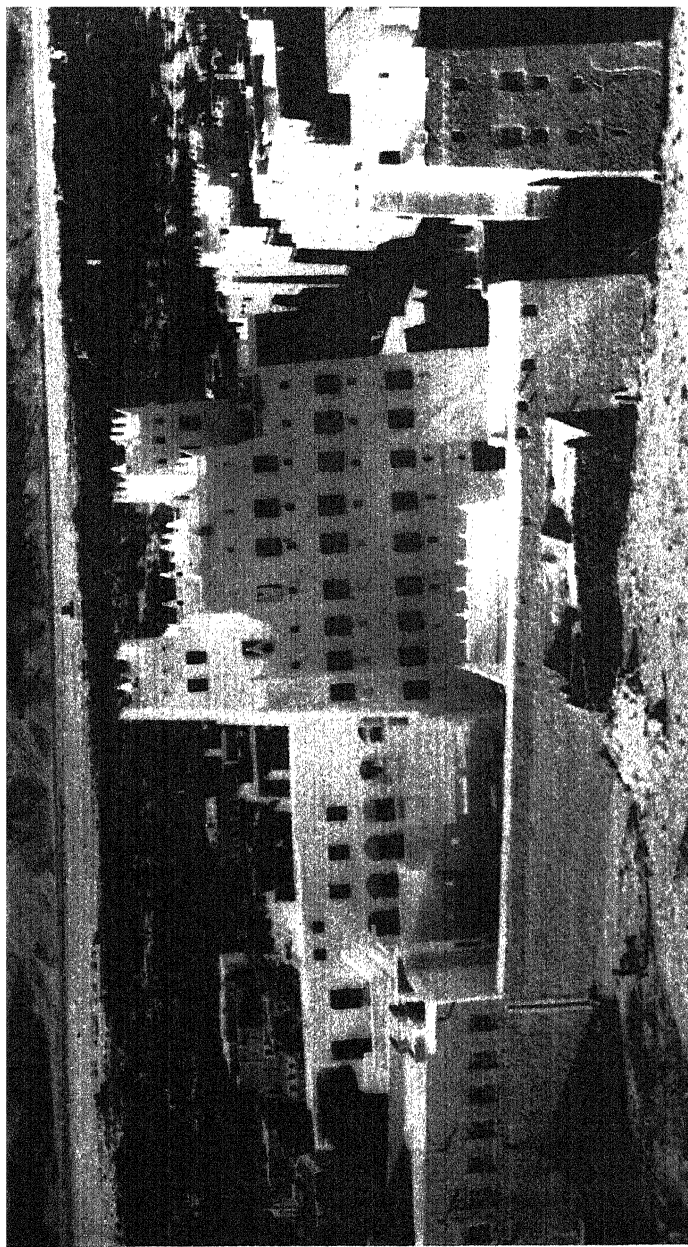




*The palace of the Sultan at Seyun.*



*The imposing pinnacle of the Sultan's  
palace at Seyun.*



*Seyun, the gleaming city of the Sultan.*

to reach Mecca, but that it is simpler for a disguised intruder, on account of the motley assemblage of nations which make the annual pilgrimage, to reach Mecca than it is to enter Hadramaut, where there are only natives of the province and where fanaticism is just as strong, if not stronger than it is in Mecca.

Not only the Europeans and the Christians, but even Moslems who do not belong to the province are regarded as "foreign," and it is extremely difficult to invent a plausible reason for one's presence there. A Chinese wall seems to surround this land, jealously guarded from foreign intrusion.

The first to make a serious effort to enter Hadramaut, and the first to succeed, was Adolph von Wrede.<sup>1</sup> Under the pretext of paying a visit to the sacred tomb of the Prophet Hud, which reposes in Hadramaut, he set out from Makalla in 1843, disguised as an Egyptian, and dubbed himself Abd el Hud. Having lived for a long time in Egypt he had mastered the Egyptian dialect, but was frequently taken for a political spy of the former Egyptian viceroy Mohammed Ali. His travels, which led him into part of the Wadi Doan—he failed to reach the Kabr Hud—came suddenly to an end in his capture by the Sultan of Choraybe.

He had been recognized and the natives demanded his execution, and, but for the intervention of an influential Arab it would have gone hard with him. However, the whole of his luggage was returned to him, he was liberated and sent back to Makalla. In the succeeding years several others, more or less successfully, attempted travel in Hadramaut, but Wrede's exploration remained

<sup>1</sup> Wrede, *Reise in Hadramaut*, Brunswick, 1873.

the most important that was made. None was lucky enough to bring away photographs with him. The first photographs of Hadramaut are those which are reproduced in this volume.

What is Hadramaut?

On every map, in every atlas, the whole area from Aden to Oman is marked Hadramaut. But this is inaccurate. The name Hadramaut, or Hadramut as it is sometimes written, applies to a far smaller area than is generally supposed.

Geographically, the country may be represented something like this: a short distance from the coast there is a steep-sided range of mountains, the highest point of which is Jebel Tsahura, 8,000 feet above sea level. When you arrive on top of this range you find yourself on a huge, bare plateau which, later, joins the central Arabian desert. This plateau, though, is intersected by valleys, called wadis, dried-up river beds, in many cases with almost perpendicular sides of many hundreds of feet in height. These giant ravines recall a prehistoric time when Arabia must have been a land of much water. The existence of towns and people is only possible in these valleys, where water is found quite a short distance from the surface of the ground. One of these valleys is the great Wadi Hadramaut which reaches a breadth of ten kilometres and which is some hundred kilometres in length—petty distances measured beside Arabia's huge proportions—since, for example, 2,000 kilometres separate Aden from Maskat. The country takes its name from Wadi Hadramaut, which in turn has a number of branch wadis, and although its boundaries extend rather beyond the area covered by the Wadi itself, the adjoin-

ing, bigger wadis and the Sultanate of Makalla are not included in the country. Whether, years ago, there existed a large realm of Hadramaut is difficult to discover from the meagre information available. At all events the name was well known, though one is less disposed to regard it as describing a definitely fixed area than to associate it with the peoples of the past, their valuable products and their fine craftsmanship, as a name for the land of their origin. During my travels in Southern Arabia I noticed that all those who described themselves as from Hadramaut came from the great Wadi itself or from one of the neighbouring places Shibam, Sejun or Terim, and that those from places farther away were highly offended if you referred to them as Hadramaut men.

Some time ago various persons pointed to the name Hadramaut as indicating "Country of Death." But there is no documentary evidence that the land was considered one of misfortune, nor can it be described nowadays as an unhealthy country: it is rather the reverse. It is more probable that the name is derived from the Arabian *Hadir* and *Hadira*, "the region of cities and cultivated land," as a contrast to *Badija*, "the district of deserts and plains." In any case this theory certainly fits the facts, whereas it seems hardly correct to describe the South Arabian plateau as a land of death.

### III.

#### Good and Evil Spirits

ONE of our sources of trouble was Mohammed, our personal servant. He, in turn, had a servant named Sëid, and Sëid was an even greater nuisance, especially when he came with us on our journey into the interior.

Mohammed was of mixed blood, his father being an Indian and his mother an Arab. He was in the Sultan's service and was placed at our disposal for the period of our stay in Makalla. As he was in the Sultan's service and a thoroughly cunning rascal he regarded it as beneath his dignity to work in person and contented himself with issuing orders to others. Apart from this he did his best to see that we never failed to receive distinguished visitors, and as we were required to offer something to our visitors Mohammed also saw to it that he had his share. In addition he had a fondness for entertaining his own guests in a remote region of the palace.

Mohammed displayed a great love for cigarettes, and he begged for them daily and hourly. Pineapple was another of his weaknesses, and he regularly ordered the fruit from the Sultan's palace, on the pretext that we could not live without pineapples.

He was a keen motorist and counted that day lost in

which he had no automobile ride. He used to roll himself in a cloth and sleep on the floor close to us, as he was mortally scared of rats, and slept so well that we had to waken him each morning. Once awake, he would report to his exalted employer and arrange for a drive in the Sultan's car.

Smiling happily, he would return and for the next hour boast of his influence, his cleverness and his daring. He would then drop us a hint that the present of a new shirt would be much appreciated.

Generally his luck held, not with the new shirts but with the motor drives: he was often allowed to make one of the party. The soldiers, too, were not averse to an occasional change; especially was this the case with our guards who frequently insisted on accompanying us, for our protection, of course, and Mohammed, owing to the limited accommodation of the vehicle, had to be left behind.

Wretched Mohammed! He would mope in a corner, shake his head, and mutter to himself: "Mohammed good, Mohammed good." Suddenly his tone altered: "The Shetan, it must be the Shetan who has dealt me this blow." Depressed and angry he would seek revenge by fetching a Magdara, a barrel of incense, and lighting it, so that the fumes might drive away the Shetan or Jin, that is, the Evil Spirit.

These Jins were no laughing matter, at least not in Southern Arabia, where they are a constant source of annoyance to all persons. You are never free from their attentions, and you must be continually on your guard against them. If a Mohammedan forgets to wash before performing his evening devotions he is certain to be



visited by one of these evil spirits, and on the following day will be ill. Then the only thing to do is to give the house a thorough smoke-out with incense. A better plan still is to post the barrel of incense outside the front door every night and thus prevent the Shetan from gaining admission.

Mohammed adopted this plan and, as a consequence, felt even more put upon when any of his wishes went astray. The blame was regularly shifted on to the shoulders of the Shetan. But Mohammed used to console himself and us with the assurance that a good spirit would eventually appear to drive the troublesome Shetan out of his body.

Good spirits, it appears, have on the whole been generous in their visits to Makalla. A story is told how, after the Nagib was expelled from the great *Husn* or palace, which is in the centre of the city and serves nowadays as a kind of Government administrative building, sacks of flour and dates were often flung out of the windows. This the local inhabitants interpreted as evidence that well-disposed spirits were at work, for Makalla contains many poor people who were able to attach a correct estimate to that sort of apparition.

We managed to enjoy ourselves in Makalla very well, despite good and bad spirits. In particular we were greatly interested in the life and doings of the fishermen of Cheri, a small village of straw huts situated a short way from the big gate in the city walls. At the time of the Kasadis this big city gate was occupied by members of the Bedouin tribe Aqabere, who imposed high duties on all goods which passed in and out of the city. Fish which was caught locally was also subject to some sort

of duty, and the annual revenue from this duty was a substantial one. Makalla tolerated these conditions for many years. It was a certain Abdul Chaliq, an official in the service of the Kaitis, who dared to challenge the Aqabere, and he succeeded in defeating them in a battle which cost them seventy prisoners who were forced to spend a lengthy residence in the Makalla gaol.

The Indian Ocean is rich in fish, profusely rich both in big and little fish, many of which assume fantastic forms. The Arabs catch and eat all kinds, including the giant rays and the much feared sharks, which abound on these coasts. As a matter of fact the Bedouins look upon shark meat as a delicacy. The fish is taken straightaway to the market, sold, and eaten raw. The shark fins which contain the best meat are dried in the sun, during which process they turn slightly rotten, until they become as hard as stone and bear a faint resemblance to the European dog-fish. The Bedouins who trade between the inland and the coastal towns, buy up these wonderfully prepared and aromatic shark fins, which with rice form practically their only items of food during the many weeks which they spend on the caravan routes. Even Bedouins who are permanently resident in the interior lay in a store of this first-class food, which they eat morning and night. A sheep forms about the only variation to this monotonous diet. On my journey to Hadramaut I had to accustom myself to this *Delikatesse* whether I liked it or not, for to reject an Arab's food would be to insult him.

At any rate shark fins are a luxury indeed compared with a species of sardine, called Aid, which is caught in such quantities that the surplus is thrown on to heaps,

and allowed to rot until it forms a slimy mass which is used as a manure for the cultivation of tobacco.

These small fish are spread out in millions over wide stretches of beach. When they have been exposed for a whole day in the sun, long enough to turn them slightly rotten, they are offered for sale. The Bedouins and even well-bred Arabs consume these foul, malodorous fish raw; and their cost is so small that they are actually used as fodder for the camels, who devour them with relish; they take the place of a salt brick. For purposes of transport the Aid are packed tightly and sewn in straw mats. But I strongly advise no one to travel with a caravan which is carrying these bales. The Aid and dried shark (called Lacham) form the most important items for trade with the inland places, where they become a substitute for butcher's meat, a luxury for the few.

Small fish are caught in nets which are dragged between two boats; sharks and rays are caught on lines. Every child, as soon as it can walk, wades out into the shallow water and practises angling. The bigger children cast a long line far out to sea and, as soon as a fish has been hooked, "reel-in" by winding the line round their heads, a feat which they accomplish at lightning speed. At flood tide, especially, young and old plunge into the shallow water and fish for the love of fishing, for the boats bring back more than enough for all. And, for that matter, it seems to be a highly pleasant occupation. In the afternoon, when the sun has passed its hottest stage, the Arabs stand in the warm sea water and tempt the fish with songs in which they summon them to "bite up"—and they are seldom let down.

Fishing here can also turn out to be a dangerous pas-

time. Natives who venture too far out to fish or swim frequently fall victim to sharks. The many natives with arms or legs mutilated or missing among the coastal inhabitants bear ghastly evidence of attacks by sharks, for these dangerous monsters, when they bite, sever bone with sinew.

Superstition is firmly rooted in the minds of these primitive fishermen. You seldom see a hut without its camel's skull or its inverted bottle in the straw roof, as a protection against the bad spirits which regularly parade round the huts after sun-down and molest unfortunate people. If the Jin has been celebrating too much the natives procure a barrel of incense and, at six in the morning, set it outside the door of the hut and hold their clothes (such clothes as they may happen to possess) in the smoke. Again, you very rarely see a child without its protective charm, usually in the form of a necklace of brightly coloured sea-shells. The grown-ups usually wear in their loin-cloths a small silver box containing a quotation from the Koran. On particular feast days the whole village is astir for the big dance ceremonies, which commence with a fetish dance round an image. Men and women take part, and the dancing continues until some of the performers fall unconscious from exhaustion.

The animal kingdom on these shores of the Indian Ocean is in itself an interesting study.

For instance, there are the big and small crab-fish. If you walk over the white sand close to the surf-breakers you notice countless little sand-hills with openings in them. These are the observation towers of the dwellings of the crab-fish. From the tops of these sand towers, which are formed from excavated sand, the crabs keep

a look-out for prey and, incidentally, the approach of danger. If you go closer to their dwellings they pretend to hide behind the sand-hills and then disappear like lightning into their holes. It is amusing to watch them from a car at low tide, when you find that the whole beach is alive with myriads of crabs. As you draw nearer to them they rush for the sea and seek the protection of the water.

There are many varieties of water birds. Pelicans swim on the tiny waves in the lagoons beyond the sand-dunes, and flamingoes with their pink necks hold mass meetings. In the evening, when the tropical sun has ceased to beat upon the earth with its scorching rays, innumerable sea birds appear along the coast in search of the prey which the surf has cast up on to the beach.

They themselves have few enemies, for the bird's greatest foe, man, seldom interferes with them here. Gulls and other small aquatic birds fly round the fishermen as they draw in their nets, and confidently perch themselves on the sides of the boats and make a hearty meal of everything within their reach.

Fantastic in form are the Southern Arabian sailing vessels. The big trading boats, dows as they are called, are built in the same manner in which they were built hundreds of years ago, and with the highly ornamental construction of their bows and sterns they remind one of old Viking ships. In many instances the deck planks are primitively secured to the main structure with strips of palm.

These dows, which are equipped with a single mast, cover enormous distances. From Basra and Maskat on the Persian Gulf they carry cargoes of dates to India, to

the Southern Arabian harbours and to the East African coast; at other times they set off on the smuggle, often with a contraband cargo of human-beings, as I have already mentioned in my description of the city of Makalla. The Oman seamen, who are members of an immigrant negro tribe, combine a second profession with that of trading: they are actors, dancers or musicians. When they arrive in harbour they stage pantomimic performances which provide them with an acceptable addition to their ordinary earnings. And their shows are not without a certain charm.

We ourselves were about to set out on a sea trip, not in an Arab dow, but in a private yacht, the property of the Al Kaff family, and our servant Mohammed became greatly excited when he learnt that the Sultan had permitted him to accompany us.

The destination was Sheshr.

In the bewitching light of the rising sun Makalla, the white city at the foot of the black cliffs of the el Kara, slowly disappeared from view, and a panorama of masses of rugged rocks unfolded itself before our eyes. The varied colour contrasts typical of these mountains produce an amazing effect: red, dark green and pink and the predominating colours.

Eventually the mountains disappeared altogether and gave place to broad plains. Somewhere on this part of the coast lay a harbour that is scarcely visible from the sea, Sheshr, a sombre, unlikely city, surrounded, except on the shore side, by a tall mud wall. This wall is remarkable for its square watch towers, or Kuts, which have been erected at regular intervals. In the centre of the city, behind a big sand-dune, is situated the ancient pal-

ace of the Jemadar or Sultan (as he also terms himself) of Sheshr.

In the moderately heavy sea which was running at the time we had a considerable amount of difficulty in transferring ourselves to the small *Zambuks* which were to take us ashore. I finally landed in a heap in the middle of a number of filthy bales, and a shower of salt water drenched me to the skin.

Such are the minor joys of travel.

## IV.

### On Thousand-Year-Old Caravan Routes

SHESHHR has three palaces. Two of them belong to the Al Kaff family and the third, in which we took up our quarters, is owned by the Governor of Sheshr.

The Governor's, or Sultan Ali's palace is an old mud building of respectable proportions, assembled from a number of unequal-sized parts, and has irregularly cut window apertures. In front of the palace are several cannons mounted on low carriages, and the guard, a hotch-potch of black slaves and representatives of various Bedouin tribes, all heavily armed with daggers, knives and muskets, is housed in a large corner portico. A portion of these warriors escorted us through the entrance door, up the narrow mud staircase and into our apartments, where they also promptly made themselves at home. They never once left us during the time we spent in Sheshr.

Mohammed, immediately after our arrival, with a view to leading a life of ease and luxury, sent for his own servant, Seïd.

The only real work I saw him perform was to take my friend's hammock (I slept in a camp-bed) and neatly



fasten it between the wooden window-shelf and one of the wooden beams.

However, as it turned out, it would have been better if he had left the job alone, for my friend Pomorski had no sooner settled himself down to sleep when he hit the floor with a terrific bump. The beam had stood the strain, but not so the window-sill which descended with a crash, endangering the heads of any Arabs who may have been parading near the house at that hour.

But, in the East, nobody allows himself to become unduly excited over houses falling down and outbreaks of fires, or things like that. What is the use of it? *Malesb!* Never mind, we'll build it up again. *Inshallah!*

Sëid arrived and there were daily arguments between him and Mohammed over fetching our meals from the Sultan's cook. Little Sëid, a Zanzibar negro of sixteen years, was by no means disposed to have all the work pushed on to his shoulders. He was the craftier of the two, had his own interests constantly in mind, and gave Mohammed a merry run for his money.

Mohammed was apparently unlucky enough to meet with a bad spirit. Although the Sultan had allowed him to accompany us to Sheshr, in order to make himself useful to us during our stay there, he had no permission to travel inland with us. It was the Jin who prevented him from getting permission!

We struck a bargain with Sëid, whom we hired for our journey. The Al Kaff family, who have resident representatives permanently in Sheshr, maintain caravans run by their own Bedouins to transport to Terim the goods which they have purchased in Singapore. We were to travel inland with one of these caravans. But

Bedouins of the Homumi tribe, who are not exactly on the best of terms with Al Kaff's Bedouins, but who hold sway over large stretches between Sheshr and Terim, were of a different opinion; they refused to let us leave the city, and negotiations which lasted ten days showed us that the only way to gain their co-operation was to bribe them. A short time before certain members of the Al Kaff family, on their way to Terim, were attacked and captured by these same hostile Bedouins; and it cost them 600 dollars to regain their freedom.

"Dollars?" I asked, surprised, when this was told to me.

Quite right. And I discovered that they were the venerable old Maria Theresa dollars, the same with which the great Empress paid her war reparations to Frederick the Great.

A hundred and fifty years later, these largish coins are still "legal tender" in Southern Arabia and in Abyssinia. The dollars, which were withdrawn from circulation in Austria, strangely found their way into these far lands, and no other currency has been able to replace them. A few of the smaller states do, to be sure, mint lower value coins of copper and silver, the latter being struck in metal obtained by melting down the dollars. Silver dollars have also been used in the manufacture of ornaments and for the sheaths and hilts of daggers. Thus the supply of currency, which steadily decreases, has to be renewed from time to time. Through British agency silver is transported to Vienna, where new Maria Theresa dollars are minted in the old pattern and stamped with the date 1780. The coins are then shipped *via* Trieste to Aden, where the National Bank of India

forwards them under military escort to the Southern Arabian states.

The caravan with which we started on our journey over the lofty Southern Arabian mountains consisted of twenty camels, twelve donkeys and ten Bedouins, and the command rested in the hands of a gentleman called Sayed Abdrachman bin Shesh Al Habshi, who represented the important noble family of Seyun. For some days our journey took us through a Southern Arabian desert landscape. Then from the monotonous steppes, with their lonely villages and watch towers, we mounted on to the century-old camel tracks which wind through precipitous mountain ravines to the great plateau which later joins the big Central Arabian desert.

In order to escape the terrific heat, usually about 106° Fahrenheit—we marched, whenever the state of the country would allow it, at night. And yet the Bedouins started to load their camels directly after mid-day, when the sun's fiercest rays descend almost vertically. Refreshing sleep or real rest was, of course, impossible.

When we gained the higher altitudes conditions slightly improved, but night travel along the narrow paths with their almost perpendicular sides grew too dangerous and the Bedouins decided to push on in daylight. From the uncertain and tottering gait of the camels it was obvious that an ascent of something over 6,000 feet was beginning to have its effects on them, though the impression which prevails in Europe that a camel can only keep going on flat land is erroneous. On the contrary, a camel with a burden of several hundredweight can negotiate some of the most difficult mountain routes with comparative ease.

Our progress was not rapid. But the step of the East, that of man and beast, is far-reaching and untiring. It is the sure, methodical pace of old cultures and has little in common with our own short, hurried steps. Bare-footed, the Bedouin marches on, day in and day out, as long as there is life left in him, over the scorching desert sands and along the stony mountain paths. The incredible endurance and toughness of the Bedouins are responsible for the maintenance of a traffic in merchandise between the coast and the high plateau, and that is in spite of his own primitiveness and the perilous nature of the country. And these Bedouins always seem to be in a good temper. To encourage their camels they shout and sing to them, and this plan actually seems to make the animals step out. On one occasion I heard a Bedouin youngster singing:

*Oh, my camel, your back is broad and fleshy.*

*You carry more than other camels.*

*Ahead there is a well where you may quench your thirst.*

For reasons of safety and in order to spare the beasts we spent two days on foot, and a very exhausting business it was, too. Our scanty clothes were rapidly being reduced to tatters.

One of the Arabs shot a gazelle. He attached a small strip of the animal's skin to the butt of his rifle, over other strips of skin. In Southern Arabia it is the custom to take a piece of the hide of every animal shot and place it on the rifle-butt as a trophy.

At last we reached the giant high plateau, whose naked expanses began to spread themselves out before our eyes.

It is a plateau of small interest; in fact its monotony becomes more depressing from day to day. The water problem began to grow acute. We had to dig for our own water and carry as much as we could in our goat-skins, where it rapidly degenerated in an evil-tasting mess which contained more that was solid than that which was liquid. Our leader, Sayed Abdrachman, and several of his people generally rode on ahead on their donkeys, kept a watch for likely wells, and prepared the camp. They then cooked the usual meal of *Lacham*, rotten shark-fins, and rice. Rarely were we lucky enough to find protection from the frightful sun under a tree or in the shade of a cliff.

Occasionally, when we were very lucky, we fell in with Bedouins herding sheep. Then, for five or six dollars we could purchase a sheep.

The preparation of a Bedouin banquet means that everyone has to lend a hand. While some fetch firing material others replenish the water supply. Then the sheep has to be slaughtered. This done, the animal is suspended from a tree, skinned, the skin spread on the ground, and the meat placed on top. The meat is divided into the same number of equal parts as there are people present. Lots are cast for the choice morsels, and each man cooks his own joint by the fires which have already been got going. Usually the meat is eaten half-raw.

The Bedouins of Southern Arabia, at least those whom we met on our travels, bear little resemblance to Bedouins as many Europeans picture them. They are not tall, majestic figures in long flowing robes. They are short and slight, albeit of splendid physical conformation, and the majority of them are totally black-skinned.

They are divided into many tribes, big tribes and small tribes, which go their own ways and sternly discountenance intermarriage. As direct descendants of Mohammed's warriors they all claim to belong to the country's aristocracy.

These tribes—I was able to identify some forty of them—attach great importance to the old laws and customs, but are extremely lax in their religious exercises. They very seldom pray, since, not having attended school, they do not know their Koran. Nor do they pay much heed to Mohammedan precepts; they do not fast in the month of Ramadan; on the other hand a promise is held sacred, not on account of the moral obligation, but because a broken word means that the culprit courts the severe punishment of being expelled from the tribe. It is for this reason that they are entrusted with the most valuable goods for transport into the interior. They are obliged, also, to afford protection to any traveller who has been placed in their charge, though in the ordinary way his life would be worth little to these same Bedouins.

The different tribes have different degrees of importance. The Sayeds, the leading people in the cities, are the Bedouin chiefs. They invariably have allied to them certain Bedouin tribes which serve them in the event of war with unconditional loyalty and without monetary compensation. Large metal war drums, which can be heard for great distances, call the Bedouins to arms.

The most important of all the tribes are those with their headquarters in Sheshr. Most members of these tribes carry as their sole weapon a curved dagger, though some of them carry in addition a sort of elongated scimitar, which is worn suspended from the shoulder.

Then come the Gabiel or Gabail tribes who also carry rifles, in most cases new Mauser rifles, although one still sees ancient flint-locks. They refill their own cartridge cases which are worn in a waist-belt. Dum-dum bullets only are used. Lowest in the scale are the Jail tribe, peasants, of whom it is said that they have always been Bedouin servants, which probably means that they were subjugated by the latter.

In addition to these servants the Bedouins keep outright slaves whom they arm with daggers and rifles.

Southern Arabian Bedouins of all tribes are simply attired in loin-cloths. The only exceptions to this rule are soldiers in the Sultan's service, and they wear tunics and a kind of turban head-dress. A simple Bedouin allows his hair to fly loose. The young men usually shave the fore part of the skull, and the effect thus produced, combined with their hooked noses, gives them an almost Red-Indian look.

Despite their very dark skins there is nothing negroid about the Bedouins. A negro can always be recognised by the lighter hue of the inner surfaces of his hands and feet, but a Southern Arabian Bedouin is all black. The eye, too, with its almost black pupil between almond-shaped lids is also typical of the Southern Arabian Bedouin. The Bedouins darken the rims of their eyelids with a black powder, and this again is characteristic of the whole of Arabia.

The desert begets gentleness as well as cruelty. It makes its inhabitants into men of steel. It welds the members of a caravan into loyal comrades whose first thought during sand storms or an attack from hostile Bedouins, or in any moment of danger, is not for their

own personal safety, but for the common good of the whole caravan. Civilized crowds when they are suddenly threatened with death become involved in panic, and everyone thinks solely of his own salvation. That is not the manner of the desert. With a careless gesture, as if rivers were at hand, the last drop of water is passed to a comrade in need.

At the same time the desert exerts a great nervous strain on men. And the longer a journey lasts the more frequent become the petty quarrels, and these sometimes end in a "set-to" with daggers.

The sixth day of our journey was attended by misfortune.

We camped for the night close to the steep side of an uninhabited Wadi, Wadi Hero, in which some nomad Bedouins of the tribe Beetelgerzat were grazing their sheep. The night was so cold that we shivered in our blankets, and our Bedouins crowded round the big fire. Your Bedouin, though, is hardened to cold as well as to heat. Without any sort of protection he sleeps half-naked on the ground. Such things as tents are unknown in Southern Arabia, at least I have never seen one.

In the morning it was discovered that several of our animals, which had been allowed to roam free during the night, were missing. A prolonged search for the strayed camels delayed our start, and a Bedouin of the tribe Tamimi, to whom the camels belonged, promptly put the blame on to one of his slaves and in a fit of temper half killed the man with his rifle-butt. Bleeding, his teeth knocked out, the wretch lay on the ground and shouted. We could hear his cries and groans for long after we had marched away. We could not and dared



not intervene on his behalf. Several hours passed before he caught us up.

Our man Sëid had reckoned on the journey being a much simpler undertaking. Being a servant he had to march on foot, and being a negro he had to submit to a good deal of rough treatment from our Bedouins. He used to arrive in camp so tired that, exhausted as we ourselves were, we had not the heart to ask him to serve us and had to fend for ourselves. Sëid began systematically to steal bullets from the Bedouins, until he had a whole pocket full of them. He then got someone to give him a rifle, filled the magazine, and began to take on the airs of a real Bedouin.

He marched proudly in front of my camel, with the muzzle of his rifle pointing in my direction. I repeatedly ordered him to return the weapon to the Bedouins, failing which I would have it taken from him by force. The suggestion that he should surrender the rifle was regarded as highly insulting; and, feeling that he had the whip hand over us (the main party of the caravan had moved on ahead, and we were practically alone), he suddenly jumped to one side and took deliberate aim at me. He had worked himself into a frenzy, into a state of rage of which a negro alone is capable.

I did not dare to move but my friend threw himself from his camel, pounced on the man, and succeeded in disarming him.

Thereupon our servant completely lost control of himself. He foamed at the mouth, and his general behaviour would have reminded me of an enraged tiger. He shouted that he would run to some Bedouins or

other, give them money and induce them to shoot us down without mercy.

The next moment he was gone.

A quarter of an hour, half an hour, but there was no sign of Sëid. We began to forget the incident.

We were passing through a wild country on the verge of one of the wadis. A few thorn bushes and an occasional tree were the only signs of vegetation. The old caravan route, on which we were travelling, wound its way round a big rock.

As I came around it I saw Sëid, motionless as a statue, his eyes blazing, taking careful aim at me with a rifle. He had begged, borrowed or stolen it from one of the Bedouins.

I shouted to him, but he took no notice.

I tried to pacify him and I threatened him, but I was wasting my breath. He slowly advanced towards me, holding his rifle in the firing position. The Bedouins, who stood by and watched, were enjoying themselves vastly at my expense.

But there was a limit to my patience: my friend and I simultaneously slithered from our camels and made a rush at the miscreant. There was a shot, which missed its mark, and Sëid legged it for the desert. We set out in pursuit and after a short run caught up with him. Taking a secure hold of his arms, we half-dragged, half-carried the screaming, biting negro before the leader of the caravan, who had him bound and suffered him to run behind his own donkey until we reached our next camp, a considerable way off.

The court-martial was held in the evening. The leader,

who was responsible for our lives, took a serious view of the case.

The refractory negro was given a sound thrashing, and ostracized; not even the other servants and slaves were allowed to hold converse with him. As far as we were concerned he had ceased to exist. As soon as we reached Terim he was to be dismissed.

For days we rode through the unending desert. We were still on the high plateau. The wadis, petty things at first, began to assume huge proportions.

Our path, the only path possible to us, was a narrow gray ribbon winding its way along the edge of a steep cliff. To have met another caravan at this point would have spelt disaster, as it was impossible to pass and equally impossible to turn round. Here the tracks were so narrow that the animals' packs actually protruded over the precipice.

On the evening of the tenth day we entered a deep ravine. The going was so rough and stony that the animals began to stumble badly.

Suddenly we found ourselves at the side of water, clear, running water with palm trees flourishing at its sides. We were in the Wadi Hadramaut.

Some distance away we saw a huge gap, whose precipitous sides were just visible in the evening haze. In that gap lay the great, legendary city of Terim, the capital of the province of Hadramaut.

With its ancient walls and battlements, with its white minarets and its palm groves, it seemed to us that we were entering a world of fancy. We passed through the huge city gate without question, for we came as guests of the country, as guests of the Al Kaff family, whose

invaluable aid had made it possible for us to visit this otherwise forbidden land. They had equipped us with the best possible passport for a part of the country which they rule: the protection of Bedouins belonging to tribes which serve them loyally.

## V.

### In the Province of Hadramaut

[F THERE is a land which to this day is practically unknown and unseen, which is the home of one of the oldest cultures this earth has known—that land is Hadramaut.

The natives themselves possess very little knowledge and very few documents about the history of their country. Although the early Arab writers have mentioned the three important trade cities, Shibam, Seyun and Terim, none of them was able to state precisely what was the actual location or significance of these cities. The Arabian belief is that a separate Kingdom of Hadramaut existed contemporary with the Kingdom of Sheba. The Arab writer Neshwan confirms this belief. At the time of the Prophet the country was ruled by kings who bore the title "Abahile", and it was through them that Mohammedanism was introduced to Hadramaut.

Centres of culture like Rome, Athens or Babylon have in their day occupied places of first importance in world history. The cities of Hadramaut, too, spread an influence far beyond the limits of their own frontiers, although we know little about it. Permanent memorials of

a time long since forgotten are the huge buildings of all kinds which still exist here.

One might almost describe these cities of Hadramaut as world cities of architecture. The wealth of fine buildings, in a part of the Arabian peninsula where one would expect nothing but deserts and bare mountains, exceeded our most optimistic expectations.

Skyscrapers in the desert, at a time when America had nothing better than wretched huts. Each of these cities, the capitals, and big and small towns, of which there are many, presents a wonderful architectural picture displaying buildings which one would never have credited an Arab population with creating. And the people who inhabit them persist in the customs and habits which obtained at the time of the Middle Ages.

The "tenements" of the poor, the quarters of the rich and the palaces of sultans are all built in the same, regular shapes, and their purity of style cannot fail to make a lasting impression on all who see them for the first time. There are definite points of similarity to the architecture of the Babylonians and Assyrians: the projecting embattlements, the outer walls, the massive corner turrets and loopholes, the tapered gate-arches and the compression of the whole house system into one huge fortress.

The reason for this peculiar style of building (it cannot be described as typically Arabian) lies in the precarious state of the country. Southern Arabia has never ceased to be the scene of predatory warfare; Bedouin raids are the order of the day. (During my travels I myself came across three separate minor wars.) Every house, every village, every city is a self-contained fort,

whose actual defences are generally enhanced by its position on high ground or rocks. Usually the ground floor, which is used for the accommodation of goods or animals, is windowless; the Arabs themselves live in the upper stories.

Moreover, these houses were built of mud.

The construction of one of these houses is carried out in the following manner: a sultan or the wealthy burgess of a Southern Arabian city decides to have a house built. Friends and relations are summoned to a lengthy consultation in the course of which the plans are roughly sketched. Then, before the actual work is commenced, there is a thorough search for competent craftsmen. When the masons and carpenters have been found there is a long wrangle about wages and such matters. Women, who seem to monopolize the work in the fields, I have never seen engaged in building.

The site for the new house is then decided upon. And, if labor is cheap, building materials are even cheaper. One method is to choose a place in the wadi which has a good clay soil and then dig down until water is struck—and it is seldom necessary to dig very deep. The water is then run off, the clay made soft and mixed with straw, and the mess is then well trodden by men or animals. The bricks which are thus formed are exposed in the air to dry and afterwards baked so hard in the sun that the buildings from which they are constructed (and the same is the case with the mud houses which one sees in Egypt and Mesopotamia) last for centuries.

The Southern Arabian house is started from the center. Eventually a sort of scaffolding is formed with the trunks of palm trees. Palm trunks are also used as sup-

ports for the various ceilings, and after the building is finished the unhewn timbers are frequently painted or elaborately carved. An important feature in a Southern Arabian house are the wooden gutters which drain water from the different rooms. Care has to be taken to insure that the water does not reach, and thus damage, the clay walls. A specialty in local building is the preparation of a cement-like lime which is used to decorate the roofs, doors and window-sills. Designs on the brown clay walls are often executed in a thick white plaster. The lime, of which there are abundant supplies in the mountains, is "worked" in pits and then beaten into shape with long wooden posts.

Terim is the present capital of the province and consists of five *Bilads*, districts one might term them, each of which is inhabited by a separate tribe. The descendants of the original inhabitants live here together with Bedouins who have made the city their permanent residence. The biggest and most important district is that of El Hota, which is chiefly populated by Tamimi Bedouins. Each district has its palace belonging to one of the five brothers Al Kaff.

We stayed in a house belonging to Sayed Abdul Kader bin Hussein bin Shesh Al Kaff and learned to say his name all in one piece. A member of a Sayed family must be ready at a moment's notice to recite his family tree to its last ramifications, and this performance often occupies a full quarter of an hour. The family history is firmly implanted in the memory of a Sayed from the days of his childhood, to ensure that in later days the name of some important member of the family will not be forgotten. Seeing that the Arabs have not a large va-



riety of names to choose from and that the same name is often repeated in the tree it is easy to imagine that the recital of such a list is a severe tax on the memory. However, there is the *Shedyera*, the big family chronicle, a most highly valued possession, by which the memory may be aided from time to time.

There also is a Sultan of Terim, but this sultan is a mere figure who has been completely ousted by the Sayeds and who lives as a sort of ex-emperor in exile with his court, ministers and slaves. He occupies a magnificent palace in the neighbouring Seyun.

Our reception in Terim was a warm and friendly one. We were put in possession of a whole palace to ourselves. Valuable gifts were showered upon us. Our every wish was studied. We had visitors from morn to night. In the morning when we were still in bed, that is still on the floor, the room would fill with guests who stayed on till mid-day. If we returned from a walk in the city—and that was not such a simple matter, for our appearance in the streets caused as big a sensation as if an emperor had come to inspect a parade—we found a goodly batch of visitors to whom we had to act the part of cordial hosts. In our own moderate clime this sort of thing can be something of a strain, but in that tropical zone it was nerve exhausting indeed, especially when the festivities extended far into the night. Much as we would have liked to return these visits there were certain among the more distinguished of our visitors who recoiled from the idea that we *Musrani* (infidel Christians) should be received in a Mohammedan household. Some even declared that they would divorce themselves from their

wives and leave the city if we were allowed to stay in Terim any longer.

There is a mosque in Terim, the Rabat Mosque, which is connected with a kind of high school where religion and law are taught and which provides its students with almost anything, even a wife, cost-free.

But the poor women have no easy time of it; they are excluded from society and completely shut away from public life. They live in the harem and are not permitted to take part in the entertainments of their menfolk. When they do appear in the streets (which happens rarely enough) they go clad in a thick black veil which has two small openings for the eyes. To set out on a journey is for a woman as unheard of as the entrance into a mosque, which is the exclusive right of a man. The greatest crime which a foreigner could commit would be to travel in this land in the company of a woman.

The women of Southern Arabia are not a very healthy lot, or at least that is the case in the cities, though the Bedouin women in the country places lead a much freer existence, go unveiled and are not so subject to tropical diseases.

Monogamy is the general rule in Southern Arabia, where only rich men can afford the luxury of a large harem. Marriages are contracted in the usual oriental manner: the man purchases a wife. Very often it is a business arrangement between parents, and the children are married when the "man" is fourteen and the "woman" twelve.

Despite the monotony of her life a woman is allowed

one small pleasure: she may keep chickens. And since a woman is more or less tied to her own apartment, and chickens have to be fed, the hen houses are simply fixed to the house wall outside the window, even if the owner happens to live several floors high. In Hadramaut the poultry are as much at home on the wing as they are on the ground, and they are obliging enough to lay their eggs at one's very window.

What does a Southern Arabian skyscraper look like inside? Well, you enter through a beautiful, carved house-door into a hall with its cemented clay staircase leading into the *medylis* or chief reception room. This room, which is always well ventilated, is also called the *mirwah* or airy room. Adjacent to this room are the kitchens and washing rooms. The kitchens are equipped with mud shelves to hold the pots and pans, while the wash rooms have their giant water jars and walled-in "canals" on the floor, and these canals are connected with wooden gutters which carry the used water outside the house. Dirty water flows directly into the street, whereas the other refuse finds its way into a pit, which, however, is uncovered on the street side. Rubbish seldom finds its way as far as the main streets; it usually reposes in the lanes which separate the individual houses.

The living rooms all closely resemble one another. The walls are decorated with white plaster, and the floors are cemented. The windows have wooden frames and artistically cut lattice-work. Glass windows are quite unknown. Most rooms have double doors. The *Geluda* (door-latch) is also of wood. Apart from the wood carvings of the Hadramaut craftsmen, whose work is renowned throughout the East, there is no furniture

as we understand the term. Carpets are spread on the floor, and big gaily-coloured cushions are used as back-rests; flint-locks, swords and richly inlaid daggers serve for mural decorations. The servants remain in the same room as their masters and listen eagerly to the conversation which takes place there. Tea and coffee are the popular beverages, although the habit of mixing a sort of ginger with the coffee, giving it a sharp taste, deprives the European of any enjoyment in it. Other people add a small quantity of ambergris to their coffee. Ambergris is an ash-coloured, morbid secretion from the intestines of the sperm-whale, and is found floating on the ocean, often within a short distance of the coast. The Arabs use this costly stuff for the manufacture of scents, with which they are so fond of surrounding themselves.

Terim is encircled by a broad palm belt. It is a city of running streams and sparkling white minarets. From my palace window I had a fine view of this big oasis with its steep rocky sides and the sea of houses of the city of Terim. An amazing calm lies over the Southern Arabian landscape. Calmness and resignation are the chief characteristics of the people, people who live to themselves, to whom time means nothing, who have produced a culture with a purity of style which is no longer to be found in the so-called civilized lands.

That the lines of their buildings should have points in common with the musical susceptibilities of the people is a consideration for which most of us will have understanding, though the music of all eastern races, whether they be Arabs, Indians or Chinese, is a puzzle to most people and an offence to many.

It is a mistake, though, to brush over this subject. One

must try to understand it; it is possible to learn from it; in it one finds symptoms which are reflected in other arts; and through comparison with the music of other peoples one can frequently draw conclusions of cultural-historical interest.

## VI.

### The Music and Dances of Southern Arabia

SAYED ABUBAKAR BIN SHESH AL KAFF, the head of the princely family of that name, had returned from a visit to Makalla, and his safe arrival was made the occasion of a fête.

It was a fête in which the whole city took part, and the *pièce de résistance* was composed of the big dances, *shopuani* or *shibwani* as they are called, the latter being a word derived from the name of the city of Shibam. Thus *shopuani* are Shibam dances.

From an early hour drummers marched through the city beating with two long wooden sticks a peculiar rhythm on the *tassa*, a small metal drum covered with an animal skin. By this means they summoned the male population of the city to take part in the *shopuani* which were to take place in the evening. These *shopuani* have neither religious nor cultural associations, but are simple pantomimes introducing dramatic songs performed in honour of a Sayed or sultan.

The dances were preceded by a procession through the city which started at about five o'clock in the afternoon. Marching at the head were three drummers, the center man with a double-sided wooden drum, the *bagi*,

and the two outside men with the *tassa*. The dancers followed in procession behind the drummers. Two or three hundred Arabs, eight abreast, sang and danced their way through the streets. Each man carried a long staff which from time to time he would throw into the air and catch again as it fell, the manoeuvre being executed to the accompaniment of a full-throated yell. The dance proceeds in the following manner: the dancers carry their staffs like rifles at the "slope" and, to the accompaniment of a *shopuani* song, their bodies swaying to and fro, move three paces forward and one pace back. They then come to a halt, twist round, throw their staffs into the air, and the dance starts anew.

More and more people joined the procession, which gradually advanced towards the palace of Sayed Al Kaff. Outside the palace, which was reached in about an hour, there was a large crowd of spectators; the women stood in an orderly group apart; the Sayeds were on the palace balcony. The drummers and dancers then squatted on the ground and took their long cloths, which up to that point had been worn as turbans or over the shoulder, and wound them round their knees, to make the position of the squat less tiring. The *shaer*, court poet, and three singers then stepped into the foreground. The *shaer* began to recite a hymn of praise dedicated to his great patron Al Kaff, and the three singers, placing their fingers to their ears, sang each verse in unison after him. This method of singing encourages the performer to imagine that he is producing a far greater volume of sound than is actually the case. The crowd of dancers, splitting up into two parties, then took up the *shopuani* song and

enlivened the scene by dancing forwards and backwards. Later they danced up to the court poet, made a circle about him and, with a big shout, held their staffs over his head. Then they danced back to their places; the court poet produced another item from his repertoire; the singers repeated it; and the dance began all over again.

After a short pause for refreshment the entertainment was continued at nine o'clock in the evening. Members of the family sat on carpets which had been spread out on the big balcony, and three singers and two poets squatted on the floor. In the hollow square thus formed were two lamps and several barrels of incense. Tea was served and everyone listened to the efforts of poets and singers. A keen rivalry sprang up between the two poets who were interrupted periodically by the performance of the singers. The singing on this occasion was more melodious, more natural and freer than that which one usually hears in Arabia; at least such was the impression made on our ears. The poems either had a love theme or were composed in a humorous vein. One of the Sayeds, who wrote down all the poems, with a view to including them in the Al Kaff family library, promised that he would dictate some of them to me on the next day—*Inshallah, Deus vollens*. . . . But, apparently, it was not God's will!

The songs and singing of the Bedouins form a strong contrast to the more or less cultured performances of these city dwellers.

The music of all primitive races—and the Southern Arabian Bedouins are certainly primitive—has a close



connection with the rest of their existence. There is hardly an occupation whereby the Bedouins do not find some outlet for their musical talents. They sing to their camels on the march; the women sing at their work in the fields; and there is not an assembly or entertainment without its singing. Here music and architecture are not the product of individual artists, but an essential life-expression of a tribe, a whole race.

The camel calls and camel songs which you hear among the Säibini, Tamimi and a few other tribes appear to have their origin in the nature of the Southern Arabian landscape. These camel calls are a sort of super yodelling, for they are formed by (a) the natural voice (b) falsetto and (c) a kind of super falsetto (very rare among Orientals), and the sounds produce amazing echoes in the mountain ravines. It is a very wonderful experience when two caravans approach each other through a long valley and the long-drawn-out echoes of the nearing Bedouins are heard from afar. These musical efforts are simply the product of adapting the voice to the acoustical properties of the local mountains.

In examining the music of primitive peoples one must, of course, dismiss all thoughts of coming across anything in the nature of an ambitious work. One is generally dealing with music as it existed in pre-Christian times. On earlier travels in North Arabia I heard shepherd songs which had their origin thousands of years ago. In many cases a Bedouin tribe knows but a single tune, which becomes a sort of national anthem of the tribe. The tunes which they play on their instruments, the *mismar* and the *madruv* (a long flute and a double

clarinet), are always the same. While I was in Southern Arabia I made a number of sound records of Bedouin music, and later, when we came to make comparisons with the music of other natives, we were surprised to find that the music of the Southern Arabs is absolutely identical with that of the Berbers of Southern Morocco. No one has satisfactorily succeeded in accounting for the music of the Berbers, who have persistently opposed Arab influence and whose music has nothing in common with the real Arab music.

The Berbers' origin has never been clearly established, and so the discoveries which I made may lead to important racial-historical speculations.

And there is a second fact which helps us: the discovery of the mud skyscrapers in Southern Arabia. On the fringe of the Sahara, in the high Atlas mountains, there are similar tall houses with similar embattlements, walls and loopholes; and these again reveal a striking likeness to the ancient Assyrian houses. It would seem, then, that there can be small doubt about a common origin. The only remaining problem is to explain how it is that two places so far apart have architecture and music which are so extraordinarily alike. That the Arabs brought their culture from Arabia to North Africa during the warlike expeditions which began in the seventh century is an impossible thought, for in that case one would find traces of it in other places besides Morocco. Moreover, the Berbers have always stubbornly resisted Arab influence.

A new theory, advanced by Paul Odinet, is that the Berbers were originally Canaanites who in prehistoric

times emigrated to Morocco. At all events my discoveries in Southern Arabia provide indirect evidence that the Berbers originally came from Western Asia and are probably the most important and most interesting result of the whole expedition.

## VII.

### The Fairy Palace

IN THE whole of Southern Arabia there is no building of more imposing dimensions, of more perfection of form than Sultan Ali bin Mansur al Katiri's palace in Seyun.

The palace is said to be four hundred years old, while the city, which is a whole day's journey from Terim, is with its five thousand inhabitants the second largest in the Wadi Hadramaut. Seyun is regarded as one of the oldest and most venerable places in the province. Of great age are its wonderful mosques, of which there are some three hundred; of great age, too, are its walls and palaces; and the big cemetery with its numerous tumble-down tombs and *Weli* domes, the resting place of saints, still exists on the ancient site. The tomb of the first Katiri to come to Hadramaut, Sultan Bedr bin Tuveriq, is one of some historical interest. It is stated that, round about the year 1490, this sultan at the head of some ten thousand men of the various tribes of Hamdani, to which the Katiris originally belonged, set out from San'a in Yemen and conquered the provinces of Hadramaut and Doan. To this day the Katiris and their chief tribe, the Ameris, still maintain themselves in Seyun and

in some of the smaller neighbouring places. But the Sultan, despite the magnificence of his possessions and his regime, is not the sole ruler of Seyun: the Sayed families of Al Habshi, Al Eidrus and Al Seqqaf also have some say in the matter, owing to the fact that they own most of the wealth of the city; and he who has riches has power. It was they who presented the city with its principal mosques with their white minarets, also the wells with their clean, white, sharp-pointed domes. These wells are a prominent feature of the city.

The Sayeds of Seyun, like Sayed Al Kaff, secure their revenues from big commercial undertakings in Java and Singapore, and they frequently distribute large sums of money among the poorer population. It is said of a certain Habib al Habshi that he dispensed yearly meat and rice to as many as six thousand persons. This action can certainly have done no harm to his popularity, for it put the Bedouins in the right frame of mind. A man who feeds the people generally has them at his own beck and call, and that is a thing of importance in the event of war.

However, generosity may sometimes lead to perilous competition, as once happened in the case of a Sayed who took it into his head to build a mosque. The mosque was a thing of beauty, all the people streamed into the new building, and the Sayed rejoiced—until another Sayed came along and planted another, infinitely more imposing mosque on the opposite side of the road. And the disloyal patrons naturally wandered over to the new mosque. The first Sayed took umbrage at this “unprincipled competition” and began to engineer his rival’s downfall. In such cases it is usual to enlist the services of

a friendly Bedouin tribe, for these religious individuals may not personally take up arms. And then the matter is generally set at rest after a murderous feud or a miniature war.

But we had no cause to complain of our sultan.

Good Sultan Ali placed a whole suite of rooms in his palace at our disposal, and we and our soldiers—and Sëid—proceeded to make ourselves comfortable.

Yes, that little rascal Sëid had found his way back to us. With cunning and scheming he managed to exhibit himself in a favourable light to the Sayeds of Terim, Al Kaff arranged a reconciliation ceremony, and Sëid returned as our servant. Al Kaff wished the little matter of the desert to be overlooked. Sëid, at first as meek as a lamb—unless appearances lied—, soon began to assume the airs of a prince, and rode from now on mounted on a camel which he had hired at his own expense; evidently the small incidental transactions in Terim had proved quite profitable. It was an object lesson to listen to the talk of the servants, Bedouins and soldiers. There was hardly a sentence which did not contain the word *Fulûss*. *Fulûss* means “money”, and money plays a prominent role, even in Southern Arabia.

We chopped and changed our place of residence between the palaces of Sultan Ali and the ex-Sultan of Terim, who leads a comfortable life in exile in Seyun. Both were anxious for the honour of entertaining the rare European visitors in their own homes.

The first is a great collector of weapons, and his palace is a museum of old Arab flint-locks, long curved swords (which are carried over the shoulder), silver powder horns and beautifully inlaid daggers in silver

sheaths. In return for a map of Arabia, which he accepted with every sign of satisfaction, he made me the present of some valuable daggers and a couple of flintlocks.

The second prince may be described as an ardent gardener. The whole of Seyun is surrounded by palm plantations and gardens, and most of them belong to the ex-Sultan. He personally spent many hours in conducting us through these splendid gardens, in which, among other things, various kinds of vegetables and medicinal herbs are grown. The care of these gardens is in the hands of the Ameri tribe, chiefly of their women and girls, who in most cases have the job of working in the fields. With the use of the most primitive tools, tools similar to those which were employed more than a thousand years ago, water is conducted through narrow irrigation canals to the very plants and trees themselves.

In this part the female population in the country places do not wear the veil; they wear a so-called *marwalle*, a wide-brimmed straw hat with a tall, pointed crown; or they go hatless, with the hair dressed with a rubber solution, rolled into balls and then tied. These fair ones have a great affection for "make-up." The rims of the eyes are blackened, and face, hands and feet are liberally painted with some indigo preparation. Others have a preference for anointing all exposed parts of the body with a yellow extract which is gained from some root. They wear long, black or dark blue dresses held round the hips by a silver girdle. In addition, they are literally smothered in ornaments of silver and brass, which constitute their sole wealth. Chief among them are heavy

rings worn round the arms, neck and legs, rings for the ears and nose, and small amulets.

A curious local custom is for the women to carry a small basket, slung over the shoulder, while they are at work. In this basket you find a young baby or, sometimes, a new-born lamb that is too weak to fend for itself.

The mothers were very solicitous on their children's behalf, and when I came on the scene their first concern was to bring them to safety. There was no telling that this white man had not the evil look. Should a child be visited by an evil spirit, a saint must be sought out to remove the curse; and that costs money, a lot of money. For that reason I never succeeded in getting one of these mothers and her basket-cradle to pose for my camera.

I should like to take this opportunity of making a few comments on photography in this land. Most of the pictures, the first to have been taken of these parts, had to be taken unobserved. I had most success with a small apparatus, a Leica, with which I was often able to deceive the natives. In streets which were not too crowded, or for close-ups, I found my Rolleiflex very useful. With this camera I could photograph "sideways," and thus the people could never quite make out what I was photographing. In any case, all pictures had to be taken without undue loss of time: there was no question of hesitation; you had to make up your mind what you were going to take, and take it. Altogether I found it a very fascinating occupation, and new material was always coming my way.

The right choice of films is also an important matter. I discovered that Agfa and Gevaert products were the



best for my purpose. For tropical countries the combination Gevaert-Leica seems to be the ideal one. Other firms' films, on the contrary, would not stand up to the great heat. I cannot say much about times of exposure, as the type of film used has a great deal to do with this. Generally, though, I exposed my films for about the same period that we would use in Europe.

The pictures reproduced in this volume form only a small part of the collection which I brought back from Southern Arabia. Altogether I have some three thousand photographs as the result of the journey.

## VIII.

### Chicago of the Desert

**I**F THERE is one thing that will induce the explorer to risk the difficulties and dangers of a journey in Southern Arabia it is the hope of discovering something about the ancient history of this little known land and of chancing upon relics of the distant past.

It was in the vicinity of Shibam, on a huge rock, the Rock of Gattan, that I found the first traces of the Sheba times in the form of inscriptions to the Moon God Sense and in curious animal drawings. And most remarkable pictures they are, too—a sort of tattooing of the rocks. The method, apparently, was to bore in the face of the rock a number of small holes, close together, and fill them with a red substance.

This rock, which at one time might have been the central point of a large public assembly place, lies on the great caravan route which still leads through the Hadramaut desert to Yemen and from Shibam to Sheba and San'a and which formerly communicated between the ancient kingdoms of Sheba, Ma'in, Quataban and Hadramaut.

Unlike Northern Arabia the South was populated by civilized races as long ago as 1,000 B.C. The Kingdom of

Sheba, with the city of Sheba in its center, was the home of the oldest culture. In the sixth century after the birth of Christ the country was conquered by the Ethiopians or Abyssinians, as they are nowadays called. According to Bedouin reports the richest remains of inscriptions, buildings and sculpture are to be found in that part of Arabia which is comprised under the name "Jof."

Unfortunately I was not able to take the ancient caravan road which leads *via* Jof to the territory of King Ibn Saud—it is still regularly used by the present-day Bedouins—as I failed to find a single Bedouin who would undertake to guide a foreigner through these dangerous tracks. Being responsible for his charge's safety, his own life would have been at stake. I was told that in the Gibela mountains, which lie on the route, there is an extremely savage tribe, the Gabiele Saar, an Arab cannibal tribe.

Thus I found it impossible to reach Sheba, though a visit to Shibam, the most ancient, venerable and powerful city in Hadramaut, amply compensated me for the disappointment.

None of the Hadramaut cities makes quite the same impression of a skyscraper town as the big city of Shibam.

Shibam, which lies in the Wadi Hadramaut at the point where the latter is joined by Wadi El Ain and Wadi Serr, is the Chicago of the Desert.

The city, in the center of the plateau of the big Wadis, stands on a high clay "pedestal." There is no city wall, but the houses (tall, narrow buildings, with many loopholes and flat white roofs) have been erected so close together that they in themselves take the place of

an encircling wall. If you arrive along the Wadi from the direction of Seyun you can see this great city with its houses of twelve or more storeys many miles away.

The city, which has some six thousand inhabitants, has only one gate, a gate with an approach that puts one in mind of the entrance to the ancient castle of a robber baron, only that the moat and drawbridge are missing. With its sturdy clay walls and high watch-towers, many of which have been erected far out in the Wadi as well as on the top of the high rocky sides of the Wadi itself, Shibam is regarded as impregnable.

Despite its favourable situation for defensive purposes Shibam has frequently to ward off the attacks of hostile Bedouin tribes and hordes of bandits. In the vicinity of Shibam, in the Wadi El Ain and in the neighbouring Wadi Doan, miniature wars and Bedouin ambushes are the order of the day. Each sandhill, each projecting rock may conceal lurking Bedouins on the lookout for plunder; and we ourselves had quite enough trouble to overcome in this respect.

One evening, after sunset, we came to the little city of Al Buger, in the Wadi El Ain. As we approached we heard bursts of rifles fired at short intervals. Nothing would induce our Bedouins to advance another step that night; and so we spent the night in a small watch-tower which housed a number of Kaiti soldiers. Later we learnt that the city of Al Buger, which is in the possession of the Kaitis, had been under siege by a hostile Bedouin tribe for two whole years. For two years the soldiers and citizens had bravely defended their city! As a matter of fact, though, great courage was not essential, for, remarkable as it may seem, the gates of the city

were open during the daytime, and the robber Bedouins peacefully entered to pass the time of day with the local citizens and make any purchases that they needed. But when night fell war began again, and night after night wild shooting ensued, without the attackers being able to make any impression against the stout city walls. The only thing to bear in mind was to keep the windows well closed. On one occasion we neglected to do this, whereupon a savage rifle-fire was opened against our window and many bullets embedded themselves in the wall. When day breaks shooting again ceases; the Bedouins wander into the city and chat gaily with the citizens whose rest they have disturbed, as if nothing had happened. And this had been taking place daily for two whole years!

Shibam is ruled by a Sultan of the Kaiti family who is a cousin of the Sultan of Makalla. At the time of our arrival this Sultan was at his summer seat at Gattan, near Shibam, and he received us there. The Sultan, a tall, lean man with uncommonly fine, attractive features, and his young son sat on the floor in front of an array of wonderful pastries and Arab sweetmeats. In spite of severe dysentery, from which he had been suffering for some time, he ate heartily of the rich foods.

My friend's reputation as a capable doctor had quickly spread through the whole province of Hadramaut. We had already helped a considerable number of persons, and we could hardly save ourselves from the onrush of would-be patients. The Sultan of Shibam decided to "consult" us, for no Arab *hakim* seemed able to cure him. As luck would have it we happened to have the best possible medicine for this illness, emetin, which is

obtained from the root of the ipecacuanha. We injected this bitter medicine into the Sultan, and there was a rapid improvement in his condition. In fact, I believe that it brought him a complete cure. The results obtained with this medicine, whose healing qualities were only discovered a few years ago, are truly remarkable; it has brought great blessing to tropical lands.

It is not such a difficult matter to heal these ills as it is to impress on the sufferers the necessity for avoiding the wrong kinds of food and drink. The Sultan was no exception. For a whole day he stuck to the prescribed diet, but the next saw him indulging in fat mutton and paprika sauce. It was impossible to keep him away from drinking water. It was only when we told him that in drinking unboiled water countless "duds," small worms, found their way into his stomach and caused this dreadful malady that he grew more careful.

Our dwelling soon became the venue of all sufferers, who looked to us to cure them. The Sultan's cure had definitely established our reputation. There are Arab physicians, called hakims, who resort to blood-letting in an attempt to cure almost every kind of illness, eye-disease not excepted. The patients readily submit to this form of treatment. You can see them sitting in the roadway, surrounded by basins, while the hakim operates. A small brass plate is placed next to the open wound and held in place with a bandage. (Incidentally, this treatment has recently been applied in Europe, as it has been found that the metal has healing properties.)

However, the hakims are completely powerless to heal fevers, especially malaria (which even at this altitude is not uncommon), eye complaints and festering

sores, which sometimes assume terrifying proportions; in many cases whole limbs fester, though the affected person generally bears his infirmity with great patience.

Similar unfortunates besieged us with requests for *daua galil*, "a little medicine." All classes were represented; the stream of callers was never-ending; all wanted a *daua* for this or that ill; they infinitely preferred our more or less merciful treatment to a dose of red-hot iron, for which the hakims have such a fondness. They apply it for all sorts of ills, external and internal, and there is hardly a person who has not been scarred by this means.

Many of our patients showed us medicine bottles bearing Arabian or Hindustani writing on the label, which they had obtained *via* Aden from Europe. It was claimed by some irresponsible scoundrel of a quack that this medicine was an infallible remedy for anything from fever to broken bones and corns.

The patients failed to see that diseases have natural causes. They stubbornly declared that it was a worm which caused their ills and pains, and this worm was sent to them by a Jin. Among them, too, were certain cunning rogues who pretended that they were ill in order to have a medicine to hold in reserve in case of illness. One individual even went so far as to create the impression that he was hard of hearing, and he desired a remedy for it. He declined to be treated then and there, and it was finally discovered that he heard better than the lot of us. Most difficult of all was to make the people understand that there are certain ailments for which there is no cure. In particular the numerous people with eye complaints made things very difficult for us; we

simply could not tell them that there was no cure, and had we done so they would not have believed us. An aged Bedouin, almost blind, whom we were unable to help, followed us for hours out into the desert and threatened to shoot us if we declined to help him. Our soldiers were evidently ill at ease, for they held apart and waited to see how the *frengi*, the foreigners, would deal with the old man.

The Bedouins in Hadramaut have their own remedy for headache. They take wood ashes and hold them in the mouth, between lips and teeth. At the same time this has the effect of disinfecting the hollow of the mouth. I came across this practice only in Hadramaut; as far as I can judge it is not used in Yemen or in other parts of Arabia.

The cities of Hadramaut are relatively clean, thanks to the wise system of canals, so that epidemics and plagues, such as cholera, seldom break out. Moreover, Hadramaut is free from our European diseases, for the simple reason that there is no communication with Europe. The physical decline of the native population in many colonized lands is in many cases directly due to the importation of European diseases and vices, to which the natives are more subject than we ourselves.

How long Hadramaut will be able to bar the way to so-called "civilisation" is a thing which it is impossible to predict. For the present the inhabitants of Southern Arabia are safe from it. We can only hope that one of the few "original" lands of this earth will be permitted to remain as it is.



## IX.

### In the Wadi Doan

IN ADDITION to two soldiers, Mavruk and Nashr, two fine specimens of the Marfedi family, the Sultan of Shibam lent us two donkeys and a baggage camel for our journey to Horeda.

The two soldiers caused us a good deal of amusement, for both were rather dull-witted and allowed our servant Sëid to lead them into various shady transactions in which they invariably were left to take the blame. Then there would be a fearful row between them, which would last for the best part of twenty-four hours. The soldiers, though, were on the whole excellently behaved; the fight never went further than talking and was always well worth listening to.

Our Sëid's ingenuity knew no bounds. One morning in Hänen, a small town in the Wadi El Ain, where we had stayed the night, we found that the donkeys and the camel had disappeared. What had happened? The worthy Sëid had on his own responsibility sent the Sultan of Shibam's camel driver home with the animals. The man, glad to be spared the tiring journey to Horeda, gave our servant a couple of dollars in return for his generosity.

What were we to do? For the present we had to stay where we were. Several days elapsed before we were able to hire a wretched donkey and a camel from an exceedingly unprepossessing Bedouin. That was the proud caravan with which we made our entry into Horeda, the capital of the small oligarchy of the Sayed family Al Atas.

The realm of the Sayed Al Atas, who also cultivates extensive interests in Java and Singapore, embraces the cities and villages of the Wadi Amid and Wadi Kasser and is populated by Bedouins of the tribes Gabiele Al Jaedi, Nahedi, Säeri, Säibani, Nauwahi and Bareshed with the addition of several minor tribes and "branch" tribes.

The city of Horeda, at the juncture of the Wadis Kasser and Amid, lies close by the side of a steep rocky cliff. The mountain which faces the city, the Jebel Gundam, and the city itself are rich in relics of the Sheba era. I was able to photograph a number of inscriptions, some of which were discovered on the floor of an old tumbledown mosque, while others were found in the doorway of a donkey stable. A Bedouin brought me a small Sheban alabaster ointment-box and several ancient Roman coins, which showed that there must have been communication between these parts and ancient Rome. The coins bore the name of the Emperor Antonius Pius of the year 200 A.D. and the stamp of the Egyptian mint.

At this point the Wadis became narrower, but were still thickly populated; town followed town and village followed village. In most cases we were the first Europeans to visit them. Here the clay soil seems to be exceptionally fertile and is extensively cultivated. Various kinds of corn flourish here; and you can ride for hours

through magnificent palm plantations. The natives' needs are very modest, and the country provides practically all their requirements. The Bedouins maintain great herds of sheep and goats. They have no cause to worry about fodder, for enough grass and plants grow between the rocks and stones to provide the animals with all the nourishment they need. In particular the date palms afford the local inhabitants with a staple commodity for trade with the coastal places. In return they take dried shark and the *aids* (a kind of small sardine) and rice which has been previously imported from India. The people of Hadramaut also deal in hides and skins, which are principally bought up by the big fur-traders in Aden.

In the Wadi Doan, which is really a prolongation of the Wadi El Ain and which we reached by way of Foddah and Meshhed Ali, lies the town of Hajaren. It was the first inland possession to fall to the Kaitis. The importance of this place is due to its location on the big trade route between the coast and Hadramaut itself.

Hajaren is a town of two to three thousand inhabitants, has a goodly number of fine buildings, and lies on the edge of a tall perpendicular cliff, at a point where several small, tributary wadis join the Wadi Doan. My friend was suffering from a severe sunstroke, and so we were obliged to stay for a time in Hajaren, in an old castle, one of whose outer walls formed a straight line with the precipitous side of the cliff. We shared its narrow, dark rooms with several Bedouins and soldiers.

Sëid had taken service with an Arab in Horeda, but before finally leaving he was to accompany us as far as Owrah, our last call in the Wadi Doan. We had no objections to his going for the fellow was the cause of

more trouble than the work which he performed was worth. The principal reason for his decision was that he feared to return with us to Makalla, for he well knew that severe punishment awaited him there.

In Hajaren he had another of his outbursts of temper. For some quite petty cause we came to words, until finally he started to shout and throw things about. Suddenly it occurred to him that he had in his pocket a number of letters of introduction to influential persons in the places we were due to visit; we had handed these letters to him, since the usual practice was for him to go on ahead and announce our coming. He took these letters from his pocket, gesticulated, waved them in the air, and threatened to burn them. It took several Bedouins and soldiers to force the little rascal to surrender them. That was the end of our friendly relations; from that time we decided to manage without his help.

Our continued journey took us through many towns and villages, through narrow valleys between the rocks, through never-ending palm plantations and through a splendid part of the country in which trees and fresh-green vegetation abounded. We missed one thing in this wonderful tropical mountain-world, and that was the rich animal kingdom which one finds at the same latitude in other tropical lands. Of the bigger game we saw only gazelles and antelopes, and not many of them, for they mostly keep to the broad plains on the high plateau. There are numbers of jackals and mountain badgers, the long, narrow teeth of which are collected as trophies by the Bedouins and fixed to the butts of their rifles. Leopards and baboons are found only in Upper Yemen. In the Hadramaut Wadis, however, there are numerous liz-

ards and snakes, but most of them are more or less harmless.

After Sif we arrived at Bodda where the local citizens expressed their satisfaction that we were the first Europeans not to shirk the difficulties and perils of the long journey, and they thanked us for our initiative in visiting them in their isolated surroundings.

We progressed farther into the strikingly beautiful Wadi Doan and saw Yubel, Matruch, Hedun, Guera, Choraybe (the capital of Wadi Doan) and the Sultan's seat in Owrah. Towns and villages lodged high on the steep rock walls reminded one of swallow's nests. We readily understood how the beauty and marvels of this country must have affected Adolph von Wrede when he, nearly a hundred years ago, came, as the first European, to visit this district. But, unfortunately, his journey was destined to come to an abrupt end in Choraybe. A horde of Bedouins pounced upon him, tore him from his camel, manhandled him and bound his arms behind his back, and then led him before the reigning sultan as a suspected European spy. They demanded an order for his execution. Only on the intervention of two of Wrede's Arab friends was his release obtained, though he lost his baggage and travel notes.

Even to-day a European who exhibits himself in the streets of Choraybe runs a considerable risk. An enormous crowd surrounded us as we made our way into the town; we were jostled in the narrow alleys; angry shouts followed us.

The time I spent in Choraybe was the most unpleasant of the whole journey. A hostile mob is no laughing matter.

## X.

### Among Robber Bedouins

BEFORE leaving Owrah in the Wadi Doan we had a suspicion that all was not well. The Sultan, Omar bin Ahwad Bassorrah, a feeble old man of almost ninety years of age, nearly blind, presented us on our arrival with a live sheep, which he had led up to our apartment, on the fourth floor, that we might admire the animal while it was still alive—which was just as well, for we saw precious little of it after it had been slaughtered. It was commandeered to provide a sort of farewell banquet for our soldiers and servants, who planned to leave us.

The Sultan, who ruled independently of Makalla, was completely under the influence of his minister, a mean, crafty fellow, who hated and despised Europeans, although he had only seen two in the whole of his life.

It had been arranged that the Sultan was to provide us with an escort of two soldiers for the ten day journey back to Makalla. But the minister, who took charge of the arrangements, claimed that the five Bedouins whom, with five donkeys, we had hired were such courageous and excellent individuals that soldiers were superfluous. Incidentally two of the men fell into dispute as soon as

the negotiations were opened in our room, which at that time was accommodating some twenty persons. They set upon each other with daggers and had to be forcefully separated. Eventually everything was settled; to the accompaniment of a terrific hubbub the journey money of fifty Maria Theresa dollars was paid out in advance; and the five men signed the contract in which it was stated that each of us was to have a saddle donkey.

So far so good, but there was a snag. Contracts are very fine things in their way, but they too often provide opportunities for evasion, and especially is this the case in Arabia.

The trouble started when our five Bedouins, semi-naked scoundrels with coal-black skins and long, straggly hair (it is impossible to picture a more savage looking horde) so loaded the donkeys with baggage and fodder-sacks that there was no room for us to ride. It took us four hours to ascend the first difficult mountain, and, having gained the high plateau, we still had to march on foot since the donkeys would not have consumed the feed which they were carrying on their backs until late that night.

Things were better on the second day, since we were able to ride and to make good progress. In addition, we bought a sheep from a Bedouin woman, and our men were put in a good temper.

Then came another mountain.

We dismounted, and one of the Bedouins took us the direct route up the slope, while the donkeys proceeded by the zig-zag route, so that we lost sight of them and

arrived on top without meeting them. We decided that we had had enough of it. Scrambling up mountains for several hours every day under a scorching tropical sun is no joke. We went on strike.

"*Hat Chmâr!*" ("Fetch the donkeys!") I shouted at the Bedouin, refused to let him answer me, sat down on a boulder and waited to see what would happen. That we were men of action and not even afraid of a member of the Säibani tribe was something our Bedouin had not bargained for. He anxiously scanned the horizon for signs of his comrades, but they and their donkeys were still far off.

We waited a quarter of an hour, half an hour. Eventually we caught sight of two figures which shouted, made signs, and fired their rifles in the air.

We pretended not to notice them and continued to sit and wait. As soon as they came within shouting distance of us we then exclaimed in unison: "*Hat Chmâr! Hat Chmâr!*" This appeared to have the desired effect, for the two men about-turned, disappeared, and soon returned with the donkeys which they led in our direction. As they approached they hurled curses and maledictions at us: it was a veritable pandemonium.

"*Hat Fuluss!*" ("Give us money!") they continued to shout, "otherwise we'll leave you to find your own way back to Makalla on foot." If we gave them another twenty dollars they would let us ride. (To this day I bitterly regret that we paid them in advance.) Soon evening came and we put up in a rest-house, a miserable, windowless hole, infested with rats and mice which ran over us as we tried to sleep. Even more unpleasant was



the fire which the Bedouins made and kept alight all night. In the small room we were almost suffocated by the fumes, but the Bedouins seemed to like them.

A kick awakened us in the morning; it was not intended maliciously, but was simply a reminder that local methods are a trifle rougher than those to which we are used. However, as we were about to climb into the saddle, we heard: "*Imshi, galíl, galíl*". ("Walk for a while, then you can ride".) And that became the daily watchword. At every slight rise in the ground we were told "*Imshi galíl, galíl*", until our patience gave out, particularly when we remembered that the Bedouins had promised us over and over again that we could ride the whole way if we gave them money.

Evening drew on, and the sky began to fill with those wonderful colourings which are only seen in mountainous parts of the tropics. The sun had scarcely dipped below the horizon when a small streak of light appeared in the East. It changed slowly from a soft yellow to a deep violet. After a brief duration of this indescribably lovely spectacle night suddenly descended.

As we had to march on foot most of the day and were only allowed to ride for short stretches we naturally grew very fatigued. We entered a deep ravine, the Maulamatar, where the route descends, and our Bedouins called to us to dismount. We had by this time had enough of this Bedouin habit, and we calmly remained in our saddles. At once there was a terrifying row and two of the men tried to dislodge us, but we resisted so violently that they fell over backwards. That stirred their anger. One of them jumped to his feet, drew his dagger, and made a rush at me, while the other man

seized a rifle, released the safety-catch, and pointed the weapon at my companion's chest.

Although we felt sure that it was not part of their programme to do away with us there and then, it was no pleasant sensation to have an oil-smeared dagger within reach of one's throat, or to feel the point of a rifle against one's chest, especially when bearing in mind the careless way which Bedouins have with their arms. In such circumstances a rifle may quite easily discharge itself. Fortunately, several Bedouin women happened to come along, and they laughed heartily at what to them seemed a highly comic situation. In the circumstances there was nothing for us to do but to sit still and maintain our calm, for had we resorted to our weapons and fired one single shot, the whole band would have pounced upon us and we should have stood small chance of escape, especially as there was a big Bedouin encampment close at hand, a fact which we at the time did not know.

We sat still on our donkeys and waited for the sound of a shot, but nothing of the kind happened. The others came up at the run, everyone laughed, we dismounted and were promised that no harm would come to us if we "unbelted," advice which we naturally ignored. Finally the Bedouins agreed that we were "great-hearted men"; coffee was prepared and drunk as a sign of reconciliation; and life proceeded smoothly, as if nothing had happened.

After we had continued our journey for another half an hour and had advanced well into the Maulamatar ravine we suddenly heard a deep rumbling sound and a couple of shots, and we assumed that we were running

into a Bedouin fracas, as we had already done on several previous occasions. In the narrow compass of the ravine, from which there was no escape, the prospect was not inviting.

Presently we heard voices, then singing and the sound of the *mismar*, the Bedouin flute. It had grown quite dark. We could see camp fires, at first two or three and then four, five, eight and ten or more, which cast fantastic shadows against the steep sides of the ravine. I counted in all fifteen or sixteen; the whole ravine was illuminated.

Eight hundred Bedouins, Gabiele of the Säibani tribe, were in camp here. A tribal gathering was in progress. We could see men and women dancing, and one sheep after the other was slaughtered on a special, consecrated stone. I found myself surrounded by dusky, oil-smearing, evil-smelling villains. I had to shake hands with everybody, for the Bedouins like all Arabs attach great importance to greetings and take distinct offence at any carelessness in this respect, although they always part without a word or sign. Without doubt they are the most curious and talkative race on this earth, and you have to repeat your story countless times before they are satisfied. None of those who stood round us here had ever seen a white man before, and, indeed, some of the children were so frightened of us that they ran away shouting, while others gingerly felt our skins.

After a third and then a fourth man had asked us the same question we had to begin all over again. The latest incident, the little squabble on the mountain, was served up in due course, and our five worthies repeatedly emphasized the fact that not even the threat of their weap-

ons had succeeded in bringing us to surrender, a statement which highly impressed them.

In dealing with Southern Arabian Bedouins there are certain points to bear in mind, for even they themselves respect a sort of law which has been handed down from one generation to another and which all implicitly obey. For instance, had I hit one of the Bedouins on the ear instead of pushing him in the ribs, an insult would have been given which could only have been wiped out with my blood. The whole tribe would not have rested until someone had killed me. There was an instance where a ten year old boy killed his own father with a dagger because the latter boxed his ears for failing to obey orders and fetch a camel that had strayed; and no man found fault with his action.

Although all these Bedouins are thieves, *harami*, who frequently stop at nothing in order to satisfy their lust for robbery and murder, we stood beneath the protection of our Bedouins, who were responsible for our safety. Had we been robbed or murdered, by our own Bedouins (be it noted!), they would at least have been expelled from the tribe, a very severe punishment similar to that of outlawry and excommunication of the Middle Ages. No other tribe will have anything to do with the outlaw, and all his property is confiscated. He is allowed three days in which to make good his escape, after which he is declared an outlaw and may be killed at sight by anyone. In most cases these renegades become absorbed by the robber bands which display a fondness for plying their evil trade in the district situated between Shibam and San'a and, on account of their lawlessness, constitute a great menace to the caravans.

On this night neither the Bedouins nor ourselves had any sleep. For the Bedouins it was an occasion for festival, and the whole valley resounded with their shouts and singing; and occasionally when there was a slight lull, one could hear the soft, yet incredibly penetrating sound of the mismar.

In any case we dared not sleep, for every now and then some figure would crawl up to us with the object of discovering what was contained in our luggage. When these Bedouins sleep puzzles me to this day.

Scarcely had day begun to break when the camp was struck and we set out on a trek of many hours through the ravine, accompanied by hundreds of Bedouins whose route was temporarily the same as ours and who continued to pester us with the questions of the previous evening. Now and then a shot was fired, out of sheer high spirits, and one heard the ominous sound of the dum-dum bullets as they sped over the heads of the crowd. That was their idea of a joke.

We had not long left the last of the Säibani when the old troubles started again. We were urged to proceed on foot, although the going was perfectly good. Not wishing for a repetition of the former scene we dismounted and walked. And the donkeys and the Bedouins marched on.

After the lapse of about an hour we decided to resort to a ruse. We declared that the Sultan awaited us in Makalla, that he had already been notified from Doan and would send his soldiers, his Askaris, to meet us if we failed to arrive at the expected time. And they well knew what was in store for them in that case—namely *fil heppes*, prison. So hurry up and fetch the donkeys!

The two men who were with us at the time were not those who were involved in the previous day's argument. They were very shocked and, after some hesitation, begged us to have a little patience, "Imshi, galîl, galîl", after which we might ride, that is if we gave them five dollars. But we were not impressed.

We waited half an hour, when the others, minus donkeys, arrived, seated themselves, and tried to talk us round. We noticed, incidentally, that the price had been considerably reduced.

We declined to stir a step, being of the opinion that the loss of time would force them to give in.

A dispute was soon in progress. The leader again demanded twenty dollars and cursed me by the beard of the prophet. But not a coffee bean did he get from me. It was only when they threatened us with the butts of their rifles that we were forced to retreat, for against five bandits we should have had little chance. So on we went, on foot, until we happened to fall in with a sheik, a Sayed Al Atas, one of the Sultan of Makalla's generals, who was on a journey into the interior. An old man with a long grey beard, he was seated on a carpet in a cave with the inevitable rushbah, the Bedouin water pipe, in front of him.

Bedouins with scented mountain herbs in their hair, came and went. Letters were written and messengers were dispatched, and all of the time salutes of rifle-fire were being given.

We were admitted and asked that our business might receive attention.

The leader of our Bedouins was examined, but, of course, he denied everything and pretended that he had

only been trying to "play" with us. Our request for soldiers the sheik declined: he could not spare them, but on the other hand he advised us to give the Bedouins five dollars as he felt confident that in that case they would bring us safe and sound to Makalla. Finally we agreed to give them the five dollars, but not until they had delivered us at the coast, and this undertaking was solemnly confirmed in writing.

From that time we had no further difficulties. For the last two days of the journey we were able to ride, and we arrived safely, our appearance little better than that of the bandits themselves, in the harbour city of Makalla.

There was a minor sequel to the story: two of our excellent guides spent a year in the Makalla gaol, though they were let out every now and then—to buy fish for themselves.

## BOOK TWO

### The Land Without Shade





## I.

### A Journey into the Unknown

[T WAS in February and the weather was quite cold, even on the Southern Mediterranean. A cold north-east wind from the snow-covered Russian steppes blew through the Dardanelles. We retreated to the warmth and comfort of the smoking room, while the P. & O. liner "Molton" sped on her way to the narrow gateway which leads to the world of the East.

My few fellow passengers were citizens of the British Empire, peacefully lazing in the comfortable leather armchairs. They were sparing and reluctant in their conversation; and this is a point of interest, for we are well aware that they leave nothing to be desired as men of action. They approached the foreigner with an engaging candour which proceeded from a firmly rooted self-confidence, and at the same time—perhaps it only comes to light out here—they had in their manner a pronounced sense of European camaraderie.

Most of them were civil servants, bound for India or the South Seas. These servants of a world-wide empire maintain a continual coming and going along the ancient highway between continents, like their predecessors, the Romans. We Germans are still conscious of this passion

for travel. The only difference is that we are thrown on to our own resources; we lack "connections"; and we are in search of adventure, of the unexpected. But my fellow passengers were not expectant. They *knew* what they were going to meet: a commission or a post in the smooth organisation of their empire. Everything was in perfect working-order. The times when they were called upon to push forward into the unknown, to secure fresh gains, were past. Theirs was the task of maintenance and preservation.

An Australian sheep farmer came over to talk to me, while his attractive robust daughter continued her untiring promenade of the decks. As might have been expected, he began to complain bitterly of the difficulties of the world economic situation. But, catching sight of his daughter as she strode past the window, he suddenly changed the subject. He told me of a visit to the land of his origin, from which he was now returning. His manner of talking was as dry and as matter-of-fact as before; but, nevertheless, I noticed a certain alteration. Behind his words there was a certain, unmistakable warmth of feeling that had not been there before. The others began to join in, and soon the subject was taken up chorus-fashion.

I have often been struck by the recognition of the firm footing which these men possess in their own world. I am no longer in doubt as to the reason. It is obvious that that small island in the North Sea is their permanent pole, a constant, dependable element in their own changing fortunes. They carry it with them in their hearts; wherever they go they make it their example; to them it is both a sanctuary and a never-failing source of

strength and confidence: their great motherland, eternal England.

Meanwhile, three tall figures in brightly-coloured, flowing robes, with lean, brown faces, had entered the saloon. They joined the ship at Algiers. They glanced round rather self-consciously, sat down in a corner, and began to talk in their typical, quiet, reserved way. During a pause in our conversation one of them turned to me, as I happened to be nearest to them, and asked some question in a halting French. I answered him in Arabic.

"*Ya salâm!*" Their faces lit up. "How is it you know our language?" I told them of my former travels and added that I planned to visit Yemen.

"Yemen? Have you got the Imâm's permission?" they asked in surprise.

I avoided the answer. There was no need for them to know that it was my purpose to enter the Forbidden Land by a secret route. And so we kept the conversation to the subject of the Priest-King himself, who rivals the Dalai-Lama in guarding his kingdom against foreign intrusion.

"The reason is that he cannot accept the responsibility for the safety of foreigners," one of them explained to me; and as he said this he cast a brief side-glance at my fellow Europeans, a glance which seemed to imply something else.

His remark about safety was not altogether without justification. Only a short time before two German travellers (and the same thing had happened to many of their predecessors) had fallen victims to the fanaticism of the natives of Yemen.

I then learnt that the three men, who were natives of

Morocco, were on their way to attend a Mohammedan congress in Cairo. It was yet another small piece of evidence that the Mohammedan world is active.

My friends from the other side of the Channel politely returned the greetings of the three men as they entered, but beyond that they ignored them. It was as if a glass partition had suddenly been drawn across the room. To treat Negroes on equal terms is a thing which they, as private persons at all events, find hard to reconcile with their position as "masters." Whether that is right or wrong, it is not for me to examine. But let there be no mistake. As servants of the Empire they have their eyes about them; they know exactly how to put self-esteem and egotism to advantage; long practice and experience in government have taught them how to ease strained relations and how to meet opposition, and if necessity demands it, to strike hard in the process.

Later on Mr. Winsloe, the Australian, wanted to know "what comic language" I had been speaking.

I gave the desired information.

"Well, to think of that!" His rather prominent, clear blue eyes looked at me as if I were a museum exhibit. "I only speak English, and that carries me all over the world."

And I dare say he was right.

The abrupt change in the scenery, as soon as Port Said has been left and the course set to the South, never fails to take the traveller by surprise. As if by a touch of the magic wand, the friendly, green shores of the Mediterranean disappear from sight. In their place another world arises, a world of vast expanses, in which

form and outline are so ill-defined that the eye can find nothing to rest upon. Colours are indistinguishable in the glare, and all noises seem to have been swallowed up in a bleak infinity.

The humid, stifling heat weighs on one's chest like lead. Not a breath of wind disturbs the turquoise blue surface of the sea, above which, day after day, the sky spreads the same, perpetual, steely shield. Just as in northern lands each ray of the sun as it finds its way through the banks of clouds is received with joy, you find yourself in these latitudes longing for a speck of cloud to provide even a moment's relief from the blistering power of the sun.

The general stillness seemed even to affect the ship. Conversation grew scantier, and the only sound that remained was the never-ceasing throb of the engines. That sound, in fact, seemed louder than usual, as if the ship, to repeat the rather emphatic language of Mr. Winsloe, were anxious to get out of this hell. Far away, across the mill-pond surface of the water, a strip of yellowish, desert-like coast came into view. In the haze produced by the overheated air it presented an almost unreal appearance. The Australian shaded his eyes from the glare and pointed to the coast: "So that's the land you're so keen to visit," he commented. "Why, there's nothing but stones and sand. And the heat into the bargain! Heaven defend me from it!"

"Oh, there are many other things there besides that," I replied, "for instance, skyscrapers. And, furthermore, they were there at a time when New York was still populated by hordes of Red Indians." And I told him something about Arabia, of its ancient culture, and how one

of the greatest of the world religions had its birth there. Further, that in the South of the country there is a dam, built three thousand years ago, which in size and technical perfection has not been surpassed by anything that has since been built. I concluded: "If you have once visited the country you always want to go back there."

On the third day we noticed astern a couple of white specks on the coastline. They represented the houses of Dshidda, the harbour for Mecca. When I last landed there I noticed, cast up on the coral reefs in the harbour entrance, the wreck of a steamer that had been carrying pilgrims and had caught fire. Most of the passengers perished in the flames; those who sought refuge from the flames in the water fell prey to the sharks.

Dshidda was the point at which the Arab world, after centuries of slumber, suddenly became stirred into action and which has been the scene of much history-making during the last one and a half decades. It was here that the romantic Colonel Lawrence landed and with the waving banner of freedom fanned the glowing embers of an Arab revolt into fierce flames, a task which the Turkish vassal, the Emir Hussein of Mecca, had at the instance of the British Government already started. That revolt became one of the mines which shattered the ancient structure of the Turkish Empire.

Colonel Lawrence succeeded in leading his "prophet with the sword," Feisal, Hussein's son and leader of the rebels, in triumph to Damascus, where the inhabitants received them with tremendous rejoicing. They fondly imagined that the day of freedom had dawned and that the greatness and brilliance of caliph splendour had been resurrected. A pretty dream. And before they had prop-

erly awakened from it the Arabian people found themselves under the guardianship of their great allies. Protectorates or separate states under native princes were formed. The aspiring Emir Hussein received his strictly limited kingdom with the cities of Mecca and Medina in its centre. With this centre of the Islamic world in his possession, and the Turkish sultans having disappeared, he was able to establish himself as Caliph and thereby became the nominal head of all the faithful. But his political rise, once so full of promise, came to a rude end.

Deep in the interior of the Arabian peninsula Ibn Saud, a descendant of an ancient Wahhabiti reigning family, cleverly picked his way through the confusion produced by the World War, dethroned the rival royal family, won back the throne of his fathers, and began to create a great inland empire which even modern armies would have the greatest difficulty in invading. But that was not enough. He thrust an arm out towards the sea, made an incursion into Hussein's territory, and took possession of the holy cities. King Hussein, having looked round in vain for the assistance of his powerful friends, had to take to flight, and he died in exile.

Ibn Saud was now the owner of practically the whole coastline on the east of the Red Sea. For the present his path of conquest was barred on the north side, for there a mightier than he held a protecting hand over two newly-formed kingdoms, and he was extremely unlikely to let go his hold over these important strategical points while his world-wide empire continued to remain intact. So the lord and master of the largest slice of Arabia turned his attention to the south and began to assail the one remaining, completely independent kingdom in the



peninsula, the kingdom of the priest-king of Yemen. The latter had the British already encamped on his southern boundaries, on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Finding himself thus hemmed in by two more or less menacing neighbours, the Imâm—which is his title—attempted to pilot his ship of state safely between the two rocks. In what measure he succeeded it will be seen later.

Farther south, on the African coast, the traveller sees the barren chain of hills of Erythrea. Behind them is hidden one of the strangest relics of the Old World, the ancient black Empire of Ethiopia, the modern Abyssinia, a lonely Christian isle in the ocean of Mohammedanism. In considering past and present it is clear how little effect geographical confines have on actual reality. These two great areas on both sides of the bridge which the Red Sea forms, despite the fact that they belong to two different continents, have always been one world with a single fate and a single history. This, too, is evident in the many legends and fables which exist. Thus the Abyssinian emperors take pride in the knowledge that they are descendants of the Queen of Sheba, that famous ruler of Southern Arabia whose wealth and wisdom are so eloquently described in the First Book of Kings. During her stay at the Court of King Solomon (the purpose of her journey was to conclude a pact of amity) the beautiful guest is said to have borne her host a son, and it was the latter who founded the Abyssinian dynasty. Accordingly, the Abyssinian rulers also trace their descent from Solomon, of which they are no less proud. Negus Menelik to celebrate his victory over the Italians in 1896 had coins struck with the inscription: "He tri-

umphed over the lion, for he is of the tribe of Juda" (*Revelation of St. John*). To-day it is known that long ago the people of Sheba wandered from Southern Arabia to Africa and established themselves in Abyssinia as a ruling class over the native population. That is the historical part of the legend.

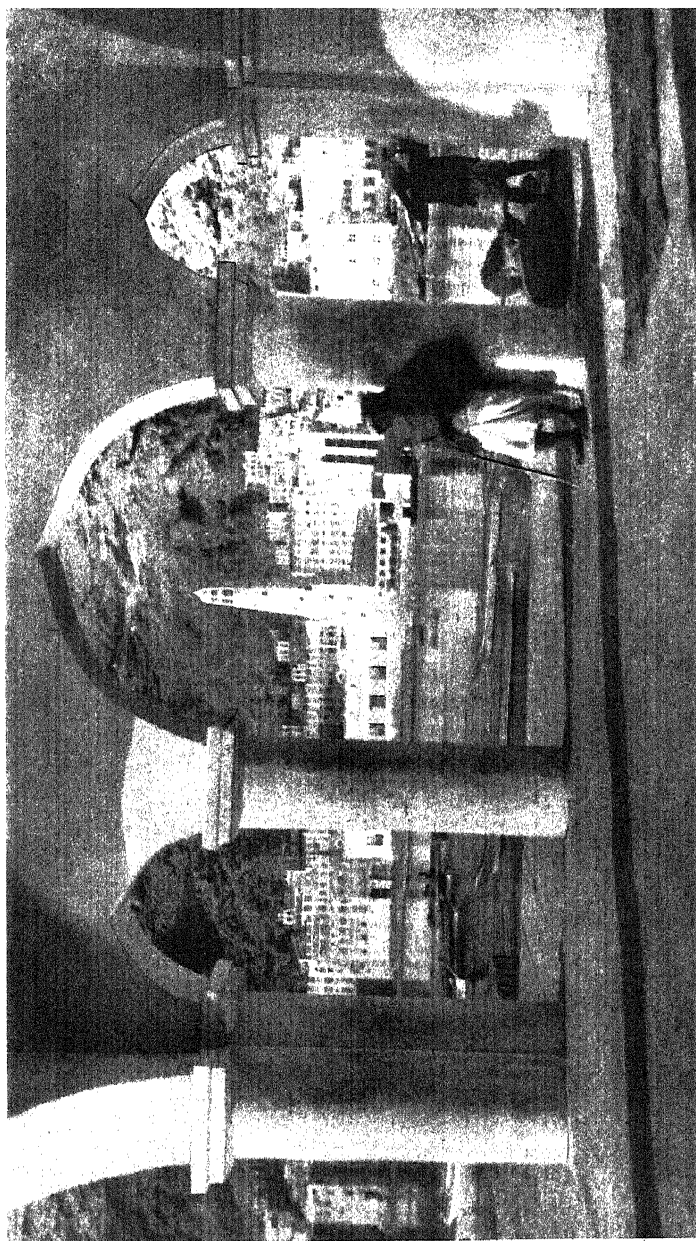
It is a curious thing, but of all the rulers on the shores of the Red Sea this woman is the only one whose memory has been kept fresh to this day. A whole wreath of legends has gathered about her, many with slight differences and various versions and some with a refreshing candour. Nearly all the Arab writers repeat the episode mentioned in the Koran, which relates that the Queen of Sheba was ushered into Solomon's palace into a room with a glass floor, and the great lady imagining that she was walking into a basin of water lifted her dress. The Mohammedan theologian Akh-Thalabi tells the legend in his own way. According to him members of King Solomon's court, who apparently did not wish for closer political relations between the two kingdoms, let the whisper go round that the visitor was in reality a Jin, a dangerous devil, with ugly, hairy donkey's legs hidden under her robe, who was only coming to cast a spell over the King and bring about his downfall. Solomon, in order to put this claim to a thorough test, arranged for her reception to be held in the hall with the glass floor; and then, as she entered and raised her robe, on the assumption that she was stepping into water, perfect, well-formed legs were revealed.

While our thoughts were still busy with the beautiful Queen, the land over which she once reigned appeared

in sight. Termed "rich Arabia" in the Bible, it was called "happy Arabia" by the Romans who tried in vain to add the country to their empire. To the Old World it bridged the way to India; an emporium of the treasures of the Far East, where gold, precious stones and spices were abundant; where culture after culture flourished, the home of miracles of engineering and architecture; and where for centuries heavily laden caravans travelled to the North with new wealth for the already overrich courts of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia. Its reputation was such that Alexander the Great is said to have planned, after the subjection of India, to take up his residence in Yemen, the name by which a part of Southern Arabia is still known. This land at the gateway to the East has been much coveted; would-be conquerors came from the North, the East, the West; with them they brought great armies or fleets, but none succeeded in making a complete job of conquest, not even the Turks, although they were the nominal owners for more than five centuries. And so Yemen remained hidden behind a veil of mystery, which the coastal haze seems to symbolize.

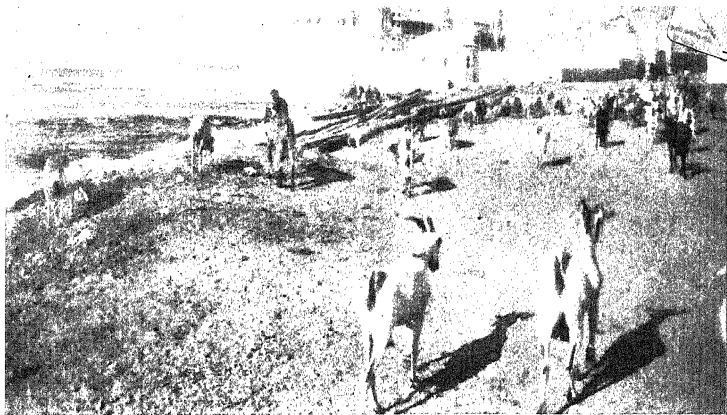
Though we passed quite near to the coast, Hodeida, too, was hidden from our searching eyes. This harbour is, so to speak, the official entrance to Yemen. There is no difficulty in gaining admission there. But as soon as the foreigner lands at Hodeida he is placed under constant watch, he is not allowed to move a step without special permission, and he may not receive visitors save with the King's own approval. He may, possibly, at the end of a long visit be allowed to proceed to San'a, the royal capital, and then only under escort and by the pre-

*A view of Makalla, through the arches of one of its buildings.*



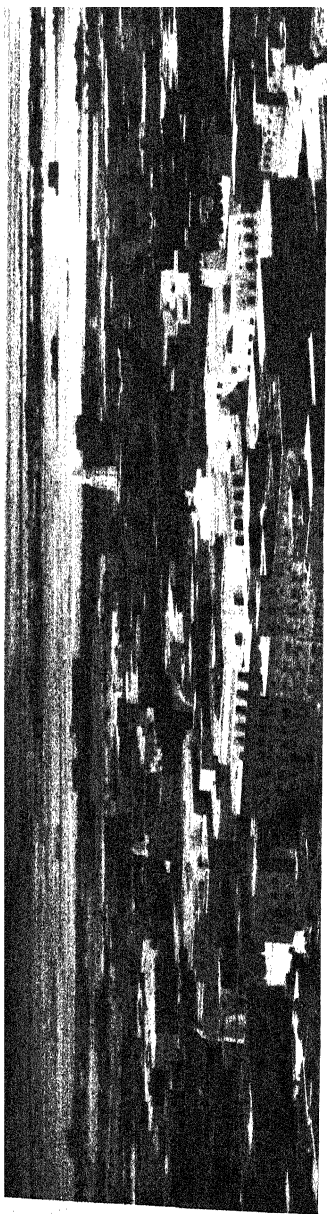


*Alone in the desert, this Tamimi Bedouin of Hadramaut had a friendly laugh with which to greet us.*



(Above) When the sun sets, the goats, as well as the native and the traveler, seek the security of the city—

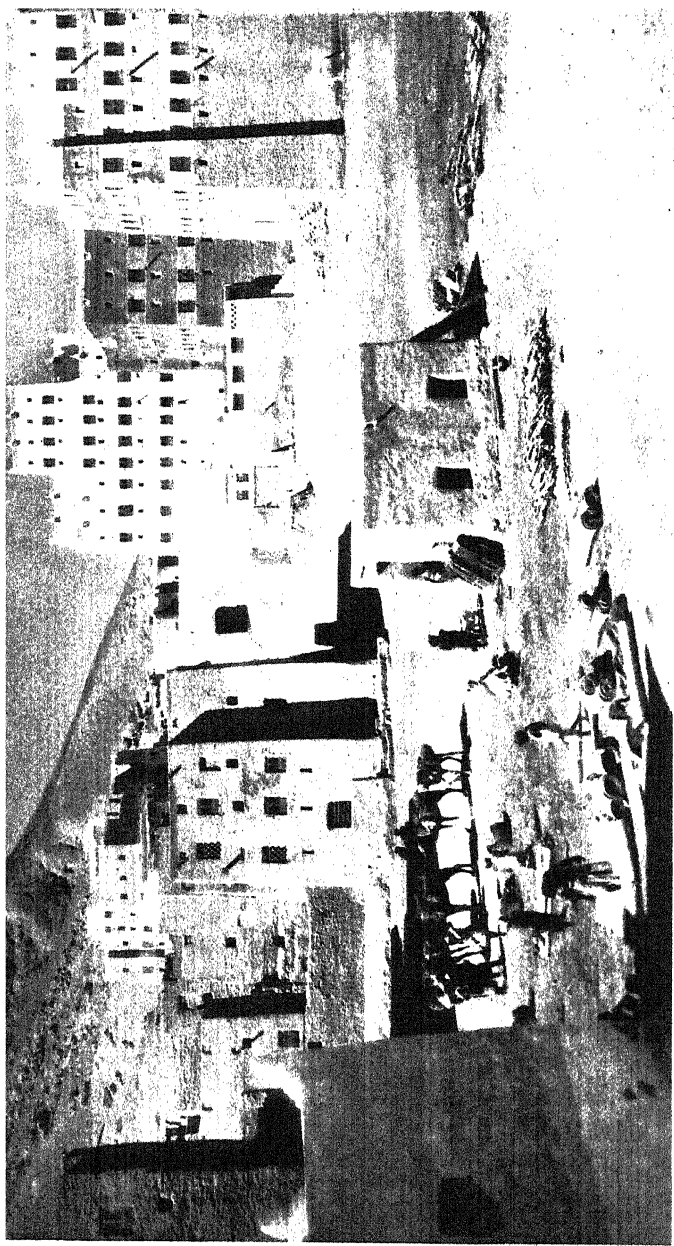
(Below) While on the desert camel and men settle down in a makeshij camp where they may await the welcome light of morning.



*Looking down on Tartin.*

*Worshippers gathered before the church in Soyoun.*





*This town in the interior of Yemen shows the strong influence of early Babylonian architecture.*



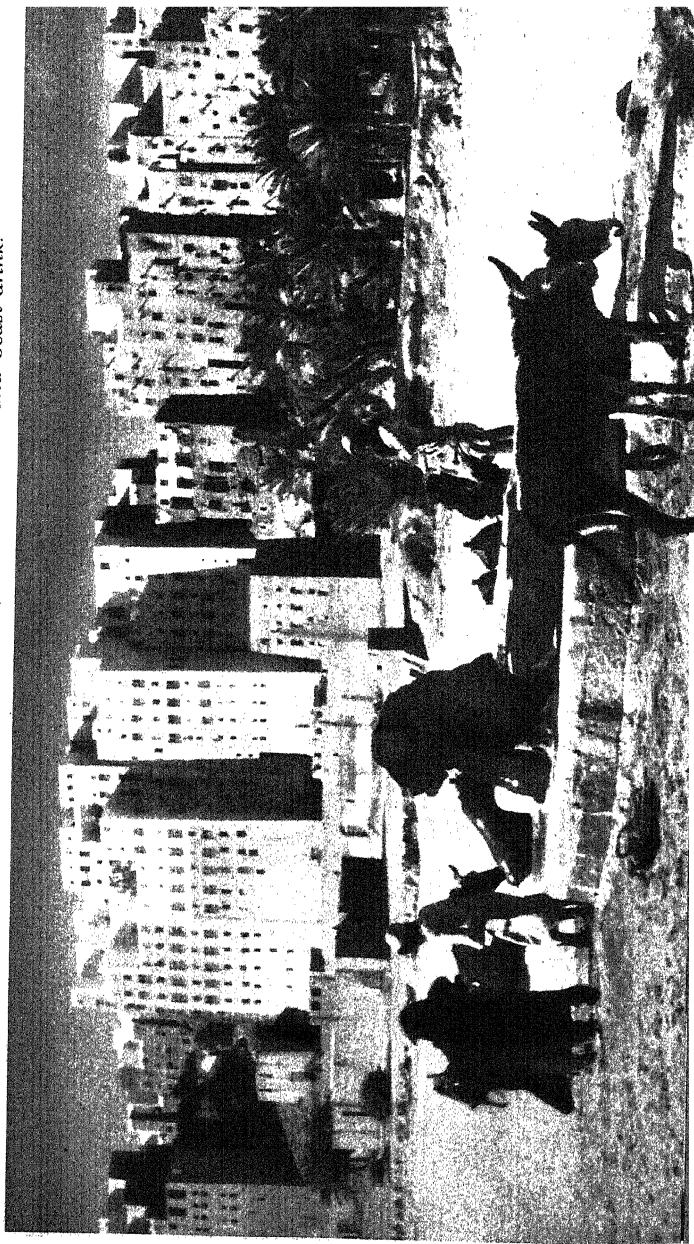


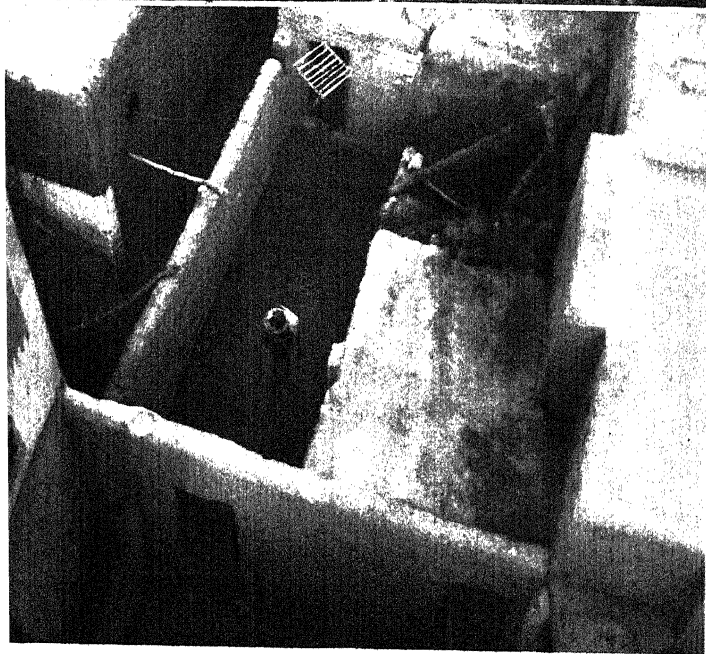
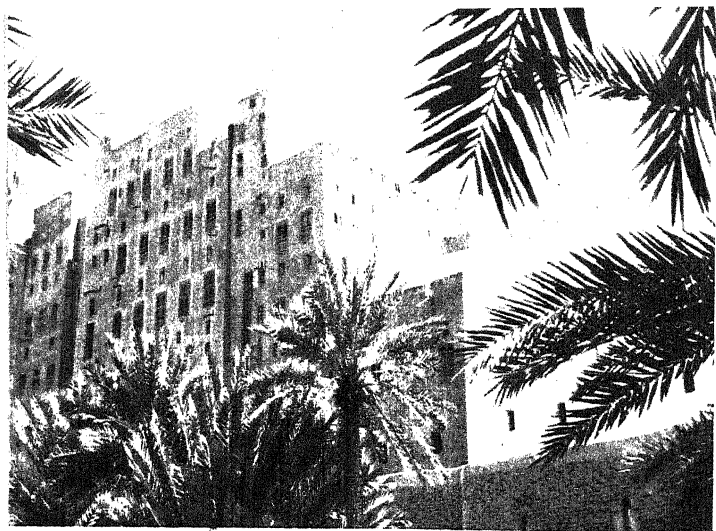
*A place of prayer in Seyun, with a well and  
a minaret.*



*Shibam, site of ancient culture in Fladramaut.*

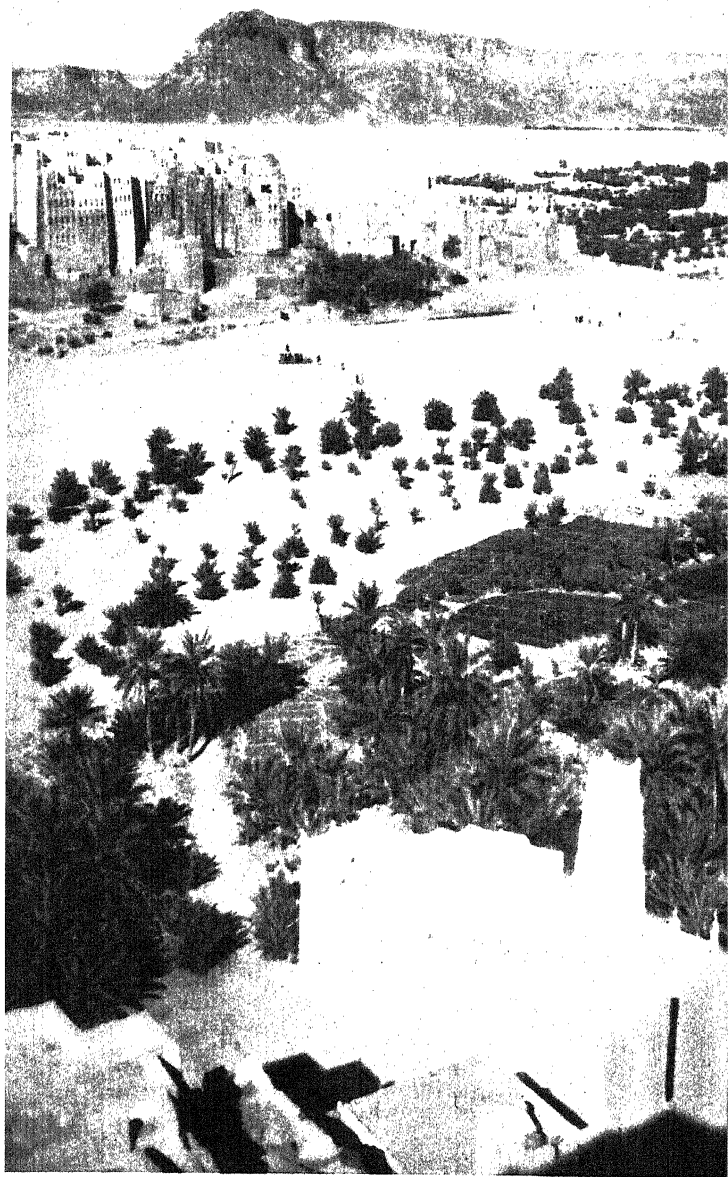
*Well outside of Shibam's skyscrapers stands this cistern from which man and beast drink.*



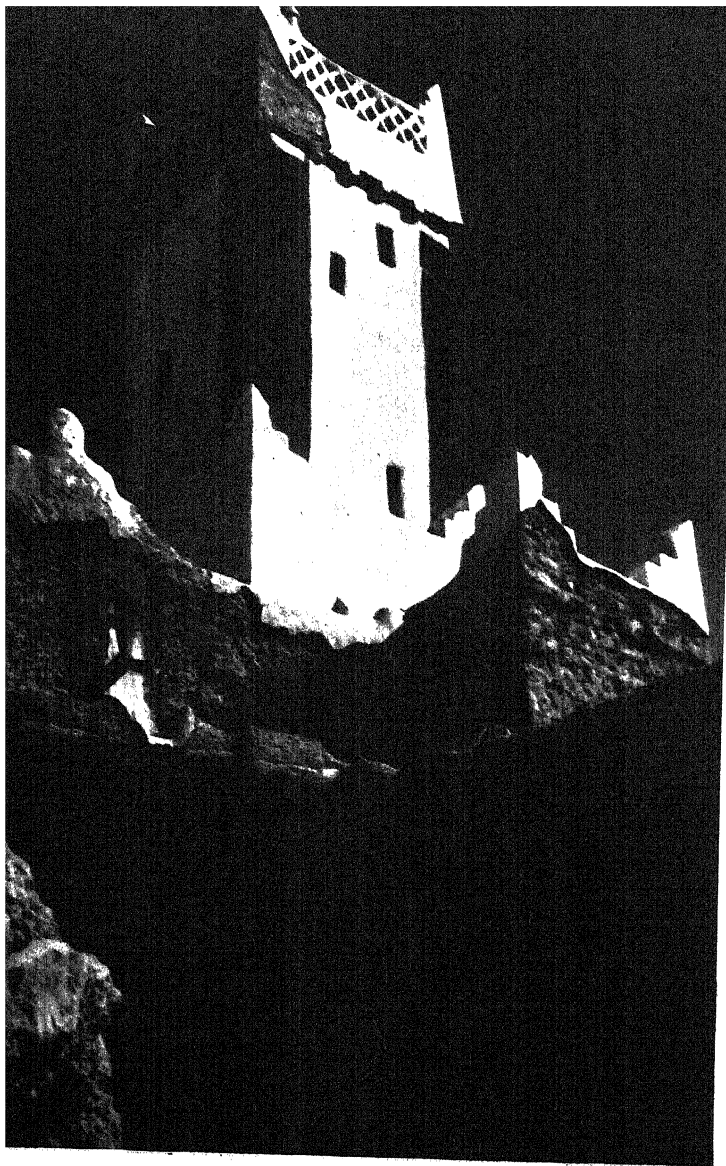


bove) Another view of Shibam.

(Below) Looking down into a walled court in Shibam.



*The Wadi Hadramaut and Shibam securely housed along its sides.*

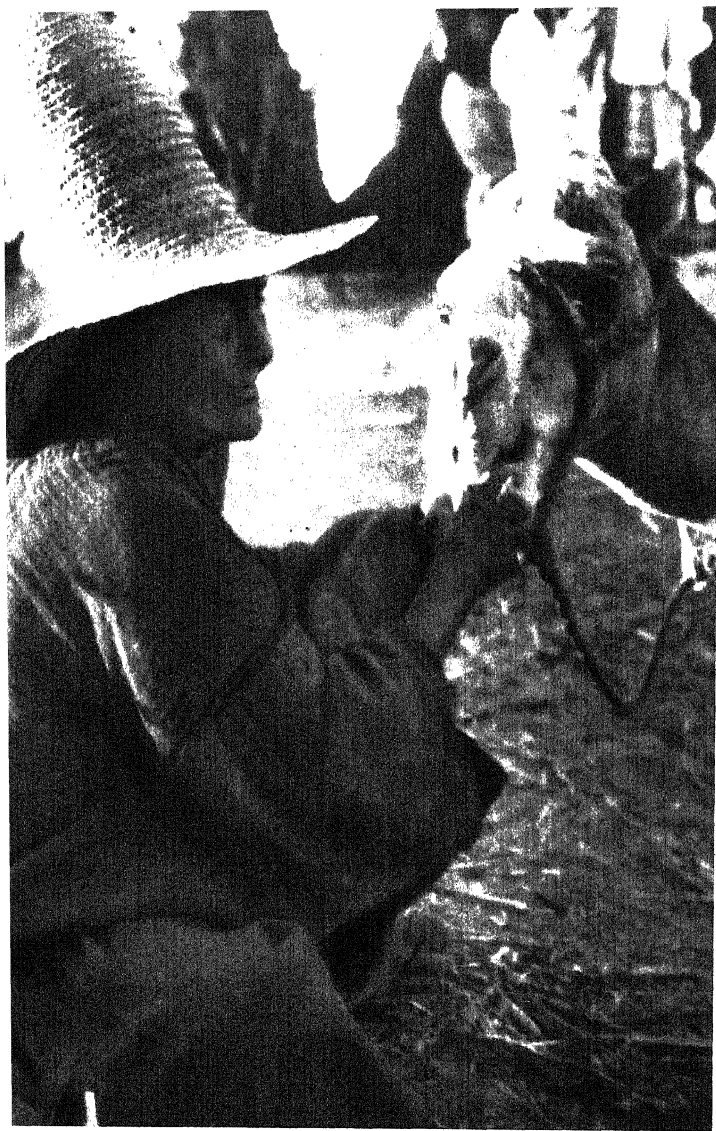


*The oldest minaret of the city of Hodeida,  
Hadramaut — an especially characteristic  
minaret of the oldest mosque.*



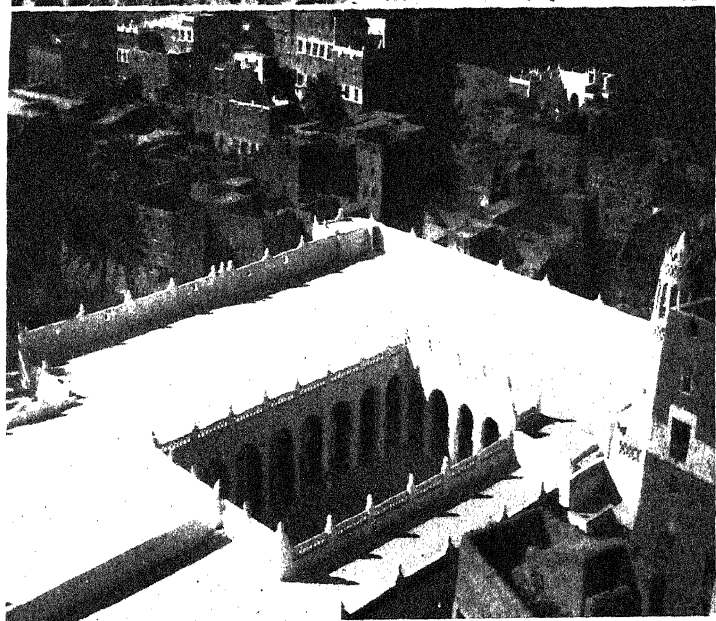
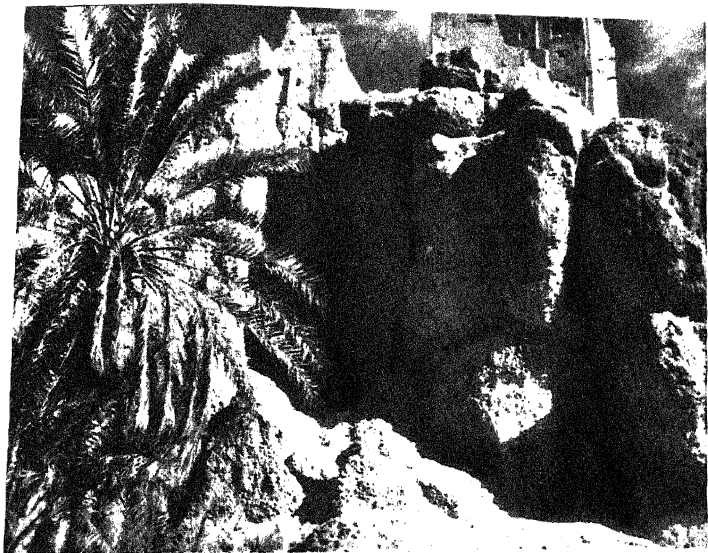
*A view of Terim.*





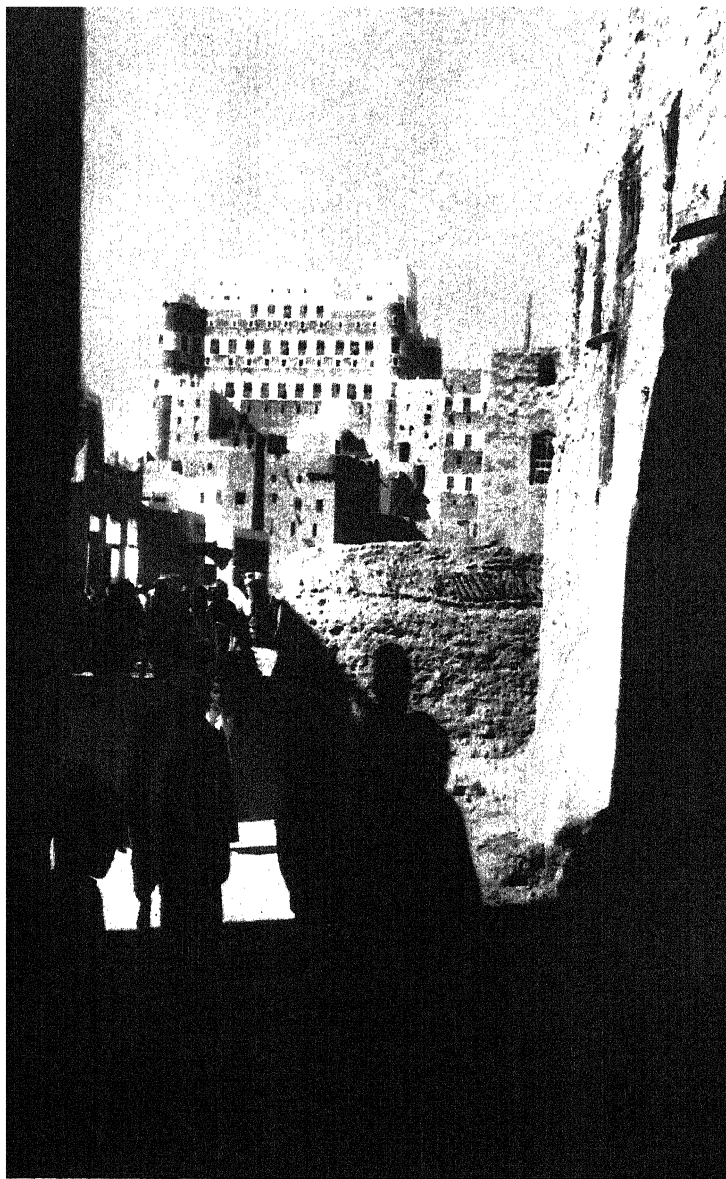
*The Bedouin women of Hadramaut are not afraid to show their faces. They never wear the thick veils of the city women. Here, one is feeding her man's camel.*





(Above) Long abandoned castles stand in ruins on the rocks of Hadjaren.

(Below) On the roof of the mosque of Seyun.



*All of Seyun is dominated by the glistening  
palace of the Sultan.*

scribed route. The studious politeness and attentive care with which the visitor finds himself surrounded form an impenetrable wall within which his observations and movements are confined. He may only see and hear those things which the King intends him to see and hear.

It was not part of my program to be led through the country with my eyes bound. I wanted to see beyond the veil and to explore the mysteries of the interior of the country. A ruse had to be employed. On the north side Yemen's inland frontier is protected from "gate-crashers" by a broad, almost impassable desert. That a foreigner should attempt to enter his kingdom from that side was a possibility which the ruler of Yemen had for a certainty not considered even in dreams, and at least no one had ever attempted it. I was banking on this assumption and on the probability that the north frontier would be less strictly guarded. So it was my plan to cross that desert and, as it were, attack Yemen in the back. The undertaking was all the more attractive, since it meant visiting places which had never been seen by European eyes.

The distance between the African and Arabian coasts continued to grow less. They almost met at a narrow channel between high cliffs, the Bab el Mandeb Straits, the "Gate of Tears". Did it receive its name through the many ships which were wrecked on its shores, or did it refer to the fact that here was the point at which for centuries human freights from Africa crossed on their way to the Asiatic markets? Nowadays, on dark nights, small sailing vessels still cross this narrow strip of sea with cargoes of slaves, whom they land at one of the

many bays on the Arabian coast. No less than three powers have established bases at this gateway to the Far East: Great Britain, France and Italy. In the middle of the Straits there is a huge, steep-sided rock; it stands there like a sentry on guard; it is a giant mass of bare, scorched stone, a dark patch on the glaring surface of the water; "might have been spit up by the devil," as one of the English passengers remarked. It is Perim, the Gibraltar of the East, cunningly snatched out of Britain's grasp by the French at the time when the Suez Canal, at the northern end of the Red Sea, was about to be commenced under French supervision.

The scene was a miracle of gold and purple as day ended and the vastness of the Indian Ocean opened before us. And for a long time the beam from the Perim lighthouse, like a watchful eye, followed us through the darkness of the night.

On the following morning we sailed close beneath the steep shores of Southern Arabia. The oppressive heat of the Red Sea was no longer quite so severely felt. It was at least possible to get up and dress without immediately becoming bathed in sweat. A strong breeze came off the ocean. We overhauled a small steamer which was executing a lively dance on the rolling swell. It was the well known "Africa" from Hodeida. Fishing boats floating on the sapphire water looked from afar like balls of cotton-wool.

As we slowly steamed between two jagged masses of rock into the harbour of Aden the white houses glistened in the morning sun.

## II.

### Powerful and Petty Rulers

I HAD planned to leave Aden immediately and proceed by the small coastal steamer to Makalla, and from there push my way *via* Hadramaut into the desert. But when I landed I found that the boat for Makalla had left early that morning. The next sailing was in a fortnight's time.

Moreover, the British authorities were not at once prepared to sanction my journey into the interior. My exalted patron, the Sultan of Makalla, to whom I owed my first glimpses of Southern Arabia, was staying for the time being on his estates at Heiderabad in India. And the personal invitation of the Sayed al Kaff, the ruler of Terim, was of no help to me at the moment. I was advised that the country was unsafe, that Europeans were unwelcome and that war and robbery were the main activities of the inhabitants. To travel alone, especially by the inland route, was an act of madness. Finally it was agreed to consult the Sultan of Makalla's representative. I was asked to wait until his reply came.

Aden is a cursed place. The small peninsula is a desolate, bare land of extinct volcanos. A poor, coarse

undergrowth is all that the saline soil will produce; and should, perchance, a few shoots of green grass appear they almost immediately wither under the scorching sun. The former lava has set into jagged peaks and rough rocks, with deep ravines and chasms, and the landscape is one giant scene of desolation. Arabian tradition very appropriately places the grave of Cain, the fratricide, in this rocky solitude. A dark ravine with high walls is pointed out as the actual burial place.

Until quite recently rain formed the only supply of water. Rain is caught and stored in huge reservoirs, some of which have been in use since prehistoric times. When rain fails, which frequently happens, water has to be carried by a special railway which was constructed for the purpose. A short time ago deep boring was carried out and wells were found in some of the valleys. In his description of Arabia in the year 1200 Ibn el Mojawir wrote: "The Aden climate is so bad that in ten days wine turns to vinegar." That was a rather curious statement for a Mohammedan to make.

If you stand on the lofty summit of the Jebel Jammār, or Sham-Sham, as it is called in Aden, you realize why this waste tract of country has always been such a keenly sought possession. At the feet of the mountain, well protected by two high hills, lies the wide harbour of Aden, a harbour lying at the doorway to the East and big enough to accommodate the whole of the British fleet. At one time the ships of the Shebāns anchored there and discharged their rich cargoes from India and Malay or re-equipped for a fresh expedition to one of their settlements on the African coast. Incidentally, it has been discovered recently that the Shebāns actually erected

fortifications and temples in the far south of Africa, whose mines they exploited.

The Union Jack has now flown over the harbour for nearly a century. The natives of Aden were careless enough to draw themselves to the attention of the growing British Empire. A British ship having run aground close to the harbour, the inhabitants, true to ancient custom, plundered the vessel and dealt somewhat harshly with subjects of the English Crown. When the reigning sultan refused to pay compensation and threatened to imprison the agents who had come to conduct negotiations British warships steamed into the harbour, bombarded the town and annexed it. The Sultan had to flee and subsequently took up his residence in nearby Ladesh, on the mainland. English history books draw special attention to the annexation of Aden in 1839 since the territory was the first to be added to the Empire during the reign of Queen Victoria.

On behalf of the proud Arabs, who at one time had a world empire of their own, it must be stated that they were not content to allow matters to rest as they were, and under the leadership of the Sultan and his successors they made repeated attempts to win back the city. Thus England saw herself under the necessity of establishing a "security zone" on the mainland, and a broad strip of territory along the coast was accordingly placed under a British protectorate. The sultans of Ladesh were awarded an annuity to compensate them for the loss of their independence.

British civil servants and soldiers look upon Aden as a sort of advance post of hell. To me, though, it often seemed a veritable paradise. When I returned to Aden

after months spent on camel-back it always seemed to me the essence of civilisation, the dispenser of all those minor comforts of everyday life, which are hardly noticed by those used to them, but which immediately become of inestimable value as soon as anyone is forced to do without them. I had, too, a friend there, a Herr M., a German merchant, whose hospitable welcome never ceased to make me feel that I had found a home away from home. He seemed to have travelled in all parts of the globe; lately he had been in Alaska, in the fur trade, and from there he had made his way by easy stages to Aden where there appeared to be more scope for his undertakings. I once—and only once!—accompanied him to the scene of his work. Thousands of pelts were spread out in low sheds; and the job was to preserve and beautify the skins in the particular and secret manner of which Herr M. was master. The work went on for hours. But five minutes of that appalling stench was as much as I could stand. Apart from that I am deeply grateful to Herr M. for recovering the whole of the films and other photographic material which I lost in Hadramaut and which he had sent on to me several months after my return to Germany.

His house, equipped with all the requisites of comfort for life in the tropics, had a large staff of servants, of whom the cook, a master of his art, was so superior an individual that he had his own special personal attendant. In addition, there were several dogs, numerous cats and two monkeys. The cats were living examples of a harmonious and correctly-interpreted family life. It was nearly impossible to move without finding evidence of a recently-established "nursery." In fact, one morning I



awoke to find that the mother cat had during the night given birth to six kittens under my bed. The two monkeys were named Max and Moritz, and they were highly unpopular throughout the neighbourhood. Finally, when they paid a visit to the local bank, scattered countless notes all over the room, and Moritz landed heavily upon the head of the chief cashier, it was decided that they had caused enough mischief, and they had to go.

One afternoon, when the sun had passed its zenith, we ventured into the Aden hinterland and visited the Sultan of Ladesh. My host's car, an old Citroën, had seen its best days and had reached the rattle stage. Despite that it ran admirably. We had not proceeded far, however, when we stuck fast in the treacherous sand; whereupon a swarm of Arabs hurried to our assistance, and with much shouting, singing and heaving the vehicle was eventually "refloated." The same performance was repeated several times.

Soon after we had passed Shesh Othman, the first town on the mainland, in the possession of the Italians and famous for its salt, we reached the frontier post. There we had to show our passes. The British authorities will not allow further progress into the mainland without the express permission of the Governor of Aden, as they are not prepared to guarantee the safety of Europeans.

We continued for many hours through the desert. All that could be seen was bare, yellow sand, a sparse undergrowth, a stony, dried up river bed and a few Bedouin straw huts. Not a bird's note, not a sound broke the desolate stillness. Now and then a camel caravan with a donkey leading the way would pass silently and uncannily.

But suddenly, as if by a stroke of the magic wand, a remarkable scene appeared on the horizon: Tall palaces, gleaming white, stood beside lofty, slender towers and domes. The whole appeared as though it were suspended in mid air, as though painted in the most delicate colours against the blue background of the sky; and the effect produced was most extraordinary. As we drew closer the brown houses, which form the bulk of the town, packed tightly together and firmly rooted in the ground, came into view. The optical illusion was explained: the upper part of the tall buildings was white while their base was brown and thus invisible in the distance.

The landscape also took on a sudden change. We began to see water between the banks along which we had been travelling and which, up to now, had flanked only a dried up river bed. Canals and numerous small channels carried water to the fields which bore an abundance of soft green vegetation. Tall date palms, heavy with fruit, were plentifully scattered among the green. The paths were well peopled by the inhabitants of the city, returning from work as the sun began to sink. Brown-skinned, supple-limbed youths, naked but for a loin-cloth, were driving the small Arab cows before them. They greeted us gaily, while the women, dressed in blue, followed us with timid and curious glances. A high, broad gate constructed of mud bricks swallowed us up. We were in Ladesh.

It cannot be said that the Sultan of Ladesh, his Highness Sir Abdul Karim, finds his position one that is everything to be desired—despite the fact that the British Em-

pire holds a protecting hand over him. On the contrary, his life is filled with anxieties.

How different it had been during my short visit of a year before. It was on the day of an important Moham-medan festival at which I was invited to be a guest. Early morning saw Sir Abdul enthroned in a chair in the garden of his newly-erected palace, a building more imposing than beautiful, which exhibited little of the splendour of ancient Arabian architecture. The garden had been laid out in the English style. The great men of his realm, who had come to pay their respects, began to arrive; and they consisted of sultans and sheiks, princelings and tribal chieftains, who at least recognized the formal sovereignty of the Sultan of Ladesh. Mounted on horses or camels, accompanied by their ministers and sons, they arrived in proud procession. The equipment was very varied. On the one hand one saw stately dignitaries, clad in costly gold-embroidered robes, surrounded by no less richly attired attendants. In contrast, semi-nude Bedouin chiefs, with lean brown faces and long black hair, stood in the centre of the wildest looking horde imaginable. But all, even the poorest, wore weapons of fine artistry and high value: there was none without his sword or hooked dagger with its richly inlaid hilt and its sheath of gold or silver. But the feature which struck the European's attention was not so much the costliness of the material itself as the sheer beauty of the workmanship, which clearly showed that the fine traditions of Arabian craftsmanship had been well maintained. The craftsmen of Southern Arabia have been famous for their weapons since time immemorial.

The sheiks and the others dismounted at the garden

entrance, and with rustling robes and clanking swords marched in at the head of their followers, to sink on to their knees before their superior and kiss his hand. This ceremony lasted for more than three hours. It was a noble spectacle; but to place it at the highest value it was no more than a gesture. For the truth is that the Sultan's power scarcely extends beyond the limits of his own possessions in Ladesh. The smaller and the smallest of the princes, as absolute masters of their tribes, do exactly as they like. As is generally the case among feudal lords they exist in a state of permanent rivalry, and the fruits of robbery and plunder constitute a not inconsiderable part of their income.

After this mediaeval ceremony came a display which might equally well have been enacted in the most up-to-date part of Europe. The Ladesh schoolmaster appeared at the head of his charges and planted himself in the centre of the great ones of the realm. After a number of folk songs had been sung in chorus, individual pupils stepped out of the ranks and recited poems of heroes and heroism in their own rich and expressive Arab tongue. What these boys of ten and twelve years accomplished was a marvel of dramatic acting and elocution. So spirited was their performance that the episodes which they related seemed to come to life before the very eyes of the audience. A tall Chinese then spoke of the special characteristics of the different peoples, and he claimed that although Europeans possessed brains better than all the rest Arabs excelled in the tongue, meaning that they were masters of the spoken word.

Indeed, the word, spoken and written, and hero-worship have always been important parts of Arabian

life. Only one who had mastered the former and was himself a brave man was regarded as a real leader. The same thing applies to-day, save where contact with the present times has tended to bring a change, if not to bring degeneration. Ibn Saud knew precisely what he was doing when he firmly closed the door of his great Middle Arabian kingdom to certain European influences.

The afternoon was devoted to displaying skill in another predominant factor in Arab life: the art of war. Many of those feats of horsemanship which form an indispensable part of every festival organised by this race which is so proud of its virility were duly performed. (Actually not a single woman was to be seen during the whole course of the celebrations.) The musicians sat round a big bright fire which stood in the middle of a wide expanse in front of the Sultan's summer palace, a short distance from the town. The skins stretched over the *tassa*, the big metal drum, had to be warmed by the fire from time to time as the tension constantly decreased. To the rising and falling rhythm of military music individual riders galloped into the arena and gave a wonderful exhibition of skill and daring.

Riding at a fast pace the horseman would suddenly disappear under his mount's belly, one foot clinging to the saddle. The next moment he would be standing on the horse's back and firing his rifle into the air. The camel-riders were no less skilful. Without ever letting go of their rifles they would vault in and out of their high saddles while the camels trotted on. Finally two opposing groups staged a mock battle, which was divided into four phases: attack, flight, pursuit and counter-attack. The display ended in a cloud of dust, with wild horse-

men, shouting and firing their rifles, and the drummers creating a fearful uproar in its midst. The spectators, carried away by their enthusiasm, were almost on the point of throwing themselves into the *mêlée*.

On that occasion the Sultan had appeared in the full glory of his power, but now, on my second visit, a dark cloud hovered over his house. When the old gentleman received me in his customary courteous manner, in the great hall of his palace, the hall in which he spends his working day in company with his ministers and retinue, before retiring to the women's quarters in a remote part of the palace, I noticed that his large eyes were tired and sad. I soon learned the tragic event which caused his sadness.

The Sultan realizing that he was fast growing old wanted to abdicate and hand over the reins of government to his son, and so ensure the latter's succession during his own lifetime. In Arabian countries succession by the eldest son is by no means certain, for according to ancient practice the principle is that the man best fitted to rule is chosen to occupy the throne. The nobles took advantage of this fact to set up an opposing candidate who was from their own ranks and who enjoyed a certain amount of support from the populace. Two parties were created, and differences became increasingly acute until, eventually, shots were exchanged at a meeting (arguments nearly always turn out that way in Arabia) and Prince Faddal, the Sultan's son, was severely wounded, losing the sight of an eye. He was taken to Aden and placed in the care of British doctors. When he had fully recovered from his wound he returned to discover that he had been excluded from the accession.

The Sultan's prestige also received a damaging blow from another quarter. According to Arabian standards one of the principal virtues of a ruler should be generosity. A prince who did not dispense money, rich gifts and hospitality with the frequency and recklessness of a Grand Seignior is lacking in one of the most important attributes of his dignity. The ruler of Ladesh had recently fallen into that unfortunate position. The reason was a political one.

The Imâm of Yemen, since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire a completely independent king, made claim to the coastal territory which was under a British protectorate, on the ground that in the past it had always belonged to Yemen and should, therefore, form part of his kingdom. But as mighty Albion was little disposed to listen to that argument the King of Yemen decided to vent his spite on the former's protégés, and a short time before he had closed his frontiers to the caravans of the buffer state of Ladesh. The whole of Yemen's exports now proceeds *via* Hodeida by sea to Aden. Ladesh had the right to place a tax on all goods which were carried through the territory, and a substantial revenue had been obtained in that way. The duty on hides exported by Yemen alone amounted to more than \$250,000 yearly. This hostile measure taken by the Yemen Government has meant the loss of the chief source of his income to the Sultan of Ladesh and the British payments are by no means sufficient to satisfy the claims which the customs of the country make against him.

We stayed as the Sultan's guests in one of his many houses, a dwelling which was occupied by two other Germans, who had been the only Europeans in the whole

of Ladesh. Our excellent compatriots, like so many others, had been forced to seek their living abroad; they had left Abyssinia two years before and were making themselves useful at the Sultan's court. They were men-of-all-work, especially where technical jobs were concerned, and besides erecting a pumping plant and repairing the Sultan's motorcars and gramophones they had actually installed an efficient lighting system in the palace. The Sultan valued their services highly, but owing to his own financial difficulties, he was unable to do very much for them in the matter of salary. Soon after our arrival the two men decided that they would have to cut their loss and try elsewhere. I later heard that they had gone to India.

Shortly after sunset on the following day we quickly got out the car and drove away. We had not told the Sultan that we intended going farther inland, for to have asked permission would have ended in the protracted negotiations which are a characteristic of the country. Furthermore, we should certainly have been provided with an escort, and that was precisely what we did not want.

We drove through rich mango and banana plantations in the valley of the River Tiban. The desert, though, begins as soon as the fringe of the fields is reached. It is not lifeless, as appears, but something highly animated and dangerous. The slightest breeze is sufficient to cause the sand to move silently and constantly forward, and in its progress it seeks to bury everything in its path. Man's handiwork is permanently threatened with destruction, and only by untiring industry is it possible for the na-



tives to rescue a bare existence from the powerful and relentless grasp of Nature. The often-repeated statement about the incorrigible laziness of the inhabitants of tropical zones is, here at least, shown to be a mere fairy-tale.

In the evening we reached a village inhabited by the Haushabi tribe. The low mud houses made a miserable impression. However, their brown walls are curiously adorned with paintings in white. The doorways end in sharp-pointed tops, and at the side the plant designs reveal a peculiar style which suggests Sheban origin. That thought became more pronounced when we saw that the Haushabi had preserved many other customs from the dim past. For instance, a short way from the village we found close to the usual Mohammedan cemetery a number of oblong graves, the resting places of tribal chiefs or persons who had enjoyed special respect, those who had claimed to heal the sick, and who were regarded by these primitive people as magicians in touch with supernatural powers. Near the graves were two or three monuments of stone. On certain days of the year the people of the village leave in solemn procession at night and anoint the stones with oil—an old heathen custom.

As soon as we arrived our car was surrounded by the whole of the villagers, who greeted us amicably and offered to accommodate us in one of the houses. We elected to pass the night under the open sky. Local spirits punished us for rejecting hospitality by sending armies of mosquitoes and small grey sand-flies which attacked us relentlessly and made sleep impossible. Otherwise it was a magnificent night.

Bright stars shed a soft blue light over the earth. The

high monument over one of the tombs at the fringe of the silent desert was enveloped in a mysterious light. The ages were swallowed up in eternity, and I reflected that the early religions of all races were for some inexplicable and mysterious reason almost identical.

The anointing of stones with oil is several times mentioned in the Bible. The coincidence is not so strange when it is remembered that the Arabs and the Israelites have the same Semitic origin. But the Hindus preserve the same prehistoric custom, and the Anglo-Indian authorities have been put to no little trouble in protecting the neat milestones erected on their newly-built roads. Promptly the Hindus would appear during the night and remove them to one of their sacred sites, where, in due course, they would be anointed with oil. It is possible that oil takes the place of blood, which was used originally. But there is considerable doubt about that, since (to quote an example) present-day Islam still recognizes the blood sacrifice at certain religious festivals and on important occasions in everyday life, whereas anointing with oil is pronounced to be a heathen practice and is strictly forbidden. At the recent opening of a new railway a sheep's throat was slit, and the lines were besmeared with the blood of the beast of sacrifice, to invoke God's protection for man's handiwork.

In all the early religions stones and monuments have played a leading part. Not only were they altars of sacrifice; in many cases they represented the deity, and in time men began to carve the stones in the form of certain deities. Content at first with a crudely carved head, worshippers began gradually to develop complete statues. At that stage a second stone was placed as an altar be-

side the statue. Strangest of all is the discovery that the same process of evolution is found among races which dwelt far away from and which never came into contact with each other. It is known, for instance, that in prehistoric times the Greeks erected stone altars by the side of statues of their Gods.

But, to continue, the heathen Arabs also worshipped trees as the symbol of deity; religious ceremonies were held beneath them; weapons were suspended from the branches. Even to-day these sacred trees may be seen close to villages and towns, with a miscellaneous collection of votive offerings hanging from the branches. The trees, also, were surrounded by a sacred area or consecrated thicket. The heathen Arabians also knew the procession, a custom which in our times Mohammedanism and Christianity still preserve. Again, we know that the primitive races of the North, such as the Teutons, had trees at which they gathered in worship; that they had their consecrated thickets; that they went in procession in a certain sacred area. The similarity proceeds even farther, for it now appears highly probable (to take one example) that the megalithic tombs of the early Teutons were not merely places of burial, they were also holy places and centres of public worship. How is this remarkable similarity to be accounted for; what is the reason for this curious resemblance between the early religions? It is one of the many puzzles which arise whenever one glances back along the ages.

On the next day we continued our way and soon entered the mountainous area which rises abruptly from the coastal plains. The car labored uphill over the loose

stones. Roads are non-existent. The gradient increased, and the mountains grew higher. Finally the little Citroën came to a standstill, and we had to get out and push in order to reach the nearby Musemir, where we had to stop.

Before us stood a giant range of mountains rising to six and then nine thousand feet in altitude, which, like a huge fortified wall, barred access to the territory of the King of Yemen. Musemir is one of those very small states under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Ladesh. Before turning back we paid a duty-call on the Prince, or Sultan, as he proudly calls himself. His palace, scarcely better than the mud huts of his subjects, was hard to find. But to make up for that he was the possessor of an antique cannon and a pair of ultra-modern patent leather shoes. He seemed infinitely more proud of the latter than he was of the instrument of war.

Soon after our return to Aden the long-awaited steamer from Makalla came into port, but she brought no reply to the official enquiry about my journey. What was I to do? I might have waited at Aden indefinitely had not the British authorities nobly stepped into the breach and granted me permission to proceed to Makalla, with the stipulation that I was to seek further permission as soon as I landed. A fortnight later, after the steamer had returned from her regular trip to Hodeida, I went aboard and departed with her, trusting to my luck.

### III.

#### In the Land of Incense

AFTER two days at sea we put into Makalla, at the time of early morning prayer. The dazzling white city, its buildings tightly packed on a small strip of land, rose out of the deep blue surface of the sea against the bright red background of a steep-sided wall of mountain. Hard by the sea stood the lofty minaret from whose summit the call to the faithful had just gone out. Arabian sailing boats with their high sides and curious afterdecks were swimming lazily in the slight harbour swell. These dows maintain an active commerce with the neighbouring India.

Southern Arabia is one end of the cultural and spiritual bridge which passes through the Mohammedan world of India and reaches as far as the Malay States. A second bridge of like nature leads from Southern Arabia, along the east coast of Africa and from thence deep into the African continent. Islam provides an excellent example of the power which a common, firmly rooted *Weltanschauung* possesses to unite, especially if that philosophy is based on religion. Thus, a Mohammedan invariably regards the foreigner primarily as the professor of an-

other faith rather than as the member of another race or another State.

Ali Hakim, doctor and harbour-master of Makalla, is an Indian, a small, stout, vigorous old gentleman in a long white robe and a red fez. As soon as he discovered me on board I was overwhelmed by a torrent of greetings, and his joy at my return was undisguised. He is the occupant of the Sultan's former palace close to the harbour mosque. With characteristic hospitality he insisted on taking me to his home, and I was soon seated on the balcony enjoying a splendid view of the blue sea, the white city and the bright red mountains. News of my arrival quickly spread, and old friends soon appeared to greet me. They were as pleased as children when I handed them their photographs, which I had taken during my last stay in Makalla.

There were still difficulties in the path of my journey, as the Minister to whom, in the Sultan's absence, I was to apply for permission happened himself to be away and out of reach. Ali Hakim read and re-read the document which had been handed to me by the Governor of Aden, in which I was strongly advised to seek official permission to venture further inland. Eventually Ali recommended me to go to Sheshr, where I had been on my former trip and where I would be certain to find the Minister.

There was nothing else to do but to take his advice. However, when I reached Sheshr I learnt that the Minister had just set out on his way back to Makalla. I suppose I should have trailed him back, but I had lost my eagerness for wild-goose chases, and so I landed with the whole of my baggage, and no one questioned my

right to step ashore. Possibly that was on account of my being well known in Sheshr. I soon found a guide to take me to Hadramaut, my immediate goal, a young Bedouin of the tribe Tamimi, a stately youngster, brown and athletic, clad in a white loin-cloth held in position by a cartridge-belt. We started early on the following morning. A Hadramaut merchant, just returned from Java, and his eight year old son joined our modest camel caravan.

To begin with we had to cross the coastal mountains which rise suddenly to a height of some six thousand feet. Keeping most of the time to a dry river bed, we continued without interruption over broken ground past a magnificent labyrinth of jagged summits and high cliffs, along yawning precipices and by ravines which ran in every direction. Only brief respites were allowed; our guide continued to urge the need for haste. A Mohammedan festival week was about to begin, and we had to reach our destination before it started, otherwise we should be forced to halt in our tracks and wait until it was over. Nothing would induce a believer to break a religious holiday and to travel while it was on.

After a veritable forced march lasting four days we gained the highest point of the route. An undulating, yellowish-brown plateau, intersected by long, plainly-marked hollows, stretched as far as the eye could see. In these less arid hollows were human habitations, which in the distance looked like a chain of green and white pearls. They belonged to Hadramaut, a recently-discovered land whose wonderful palaces and fantastic cities I have described in the first part of this book.

To the ancients this "Hazamareth," as it is called in

the Bible, was well known. Plinius named it "The Exalted," by which he referred not only to its high situation but also to its rank and reputation. At one time it must have been very rich, for from Hadramaut came those two products which the whole of the Old World so highly valued: incense and myrrh. Hadramaut was known as the land of incense.

While the incense served for purposes of worship, to invoke the gods or as an antidote to evil spirits, the myrrh tree provided an indispensable luxury. Its sweet-scented oil, manufactured into divers kinds of ointment and pomades, was a standard article in the rich arsenal of beauty-aids with which the women of Egypt, Greece, and Rome sought to enhance or preserve their natural attractions. The incense which is used to-day in Christian churches is partly imported from Hadramaut. Actually there is a finer sort of incense, which is only grown in India and is unknown in Europe. It is guarded by the Arabians like some costly jewel and has such a delicacy, such a piquant aroma, and is so soothing to the nerves that it bears not the remotest resemblance to the dullness and heaviness of the incense which we use.

Hadramaut would hardly have enjoyed its ancient fame had it been content merely to heap up riches. The energetic and constructive minds of its inhabitants developed a culture whose traditions are preserved in the style and beauty of the splendid buildings which exist to this day. Admittedly they are but remnants of an infinitely more glorious past. The countless ruins belonging to a long-forgotten age are witnesses for that past; extending as they do for mile after mile through the valleys, in many cases with only the fringe of a wall



projecting through the sand, they simply wait for the spade of the archæologist. The suspicions and superstitions of the inhabitants have hitherto hindered systematic exploration.

While we were still struggling on our way to the city of Terim, completely exhausted by the speed of our journey, I received a pleasant surprise. On the horizon appeared two black dots, followed by columns of dust, which drew steadily nearer. They turned out to be two motorcars, which Abu Bakr al Kaff, learning of my visit, had sent to meet me. They were driven by two of his sons.

I was told that the two cars had previously been transported from Singapore to Sheshr by sea. At Sheshr they were dismantled, packed on to the backs of camels, and were in that way taken over the roadless mountain chain. When they arrived on top they were carefully pieced together again. And so I arrived in Terim in comfort, even if the manner of my transport seemed out of keeping with the customs of the country.

Hadramaut is ruled by several feudal lords who bear the title "Sultan." But they have small say in the affairs of their territories. In most cases they live within the confines of their splendid palaces where they, together with their ministers and imposing courts, lead a comfortable, if not entirely voluntary, life of ease. The real rulers of Hadramaut are the five brothers Al Kaff who belong to a merchant family descended from the old nobility of the country. The whole trade of the country is in their hands, and they own valuable possessions in India and Further India (incidentally the two largest and best hotels in Singapore belong to them); and their huge

wealth is the source of their regal power. One might term them the Medicis of Hadramaut.

Indeed, in Terim, where Abu Bakr al Kaff holds sway, one might well be staying at the mediaeval court of one of the Medicis. I was again received with that generous hospitality which Al Kaff seems to dispense as a matter of course. A delightful pavilion of many rooms, built in the Indian style, was set aside for my use; fifty servants were placed at my disposal; presents were showered upon me.

I spent part of each morning, as the custom prescribed, in my host's palace. Abu Bakr would be reclining on a divan covered with magnificent Javanese cloth, in a broad salon which opened on to a garden filled with all kinds of exotic plants. Friends and acquaintances were seated around; messengers came and went; the latest events were (in the absence of newspapers) reported and discussed; business affairs were attended to; the affairs of the country were debated. Everything took place with quietness and reserve, without hurry, without loud speech and without excitement; and where points of view came into conflict Abu Bakr passed his decisions with that pleasant ease which is the essence of real command.

On one day the master of this fine house sent word that he had no other visitors and that he would like to see me. After a preliminary interchange of the usual civilities he asked his secretary for a certain portfolio, and in it was a letter which he handed to me. It was a letter written in German, and its contents were roughly as follows:

"I am a German girl living in the Ruhr Territory. I

have always hoped for a bit of happiness, and I am thinking that as you are a very rich Sultan you may be able to help me to obtain it. I am engaged to an electrical engineer who works at one of the mines, but he is not sufficiently well off for us to get married. We are very much in love with each other and hope that the richest man in Hadramaut will have some sympathy for our situation."

How it happened that the writer heard of Hadramaut's rich man was a puzzle to me. Having translated the letter, I returned it to Abu Bakr, who thought for a moment and then said: "Write and tell her that she is to come to Hadramaut: I myself will marry her."

I was not in possession of accurate information as to the number of wives and concubines whom the no longer young Abu Bakr possessed. But I know that in Arabia the number of a man's wives is generally in proportion to his wealth and this principle applied to Abu would infer that the total was probably an imposing one. In any case, he had innumerable children of all ages. I remember that in Seyun there was a highly respected and wealthy citizen, an old man nearly blind, approaching his ninetieth anniversary, who called no fewer than seventy wives his own. In the case of the letter-writer I omitted to pass on the offer of marriage, as Abu Bakr's ideas of conjugal happiness might have proved somewhat difficult to reconcile with those of the young lady from the Ruhr.

I had many opportunities during my stay of studying the colour, splendour, and peculiarities of a Southern Arabian court. In fact, I had more time for that study than pleased me. I had the utmost difficulty in obtaining

a hearing for my plans. Over and over again I began to talk to Abu Bakr about it, but as soon as I touched upon the subject he earnestly advised me to abandon the project on account of the attendant serious dangers. Personally he was unable to help me very much, as his power came to an end at the Hadramaut frontier.

The danger in itself would not have deterred me, for that has always to be reckoned with in such cases. But another circumstance, with which I had not bargained, threatened to ruin the whole affair. More than anything I needed a guide, as any attempt to cross the desert without one would have been a failure from the very start.

It so happened that the people of Yemen and those of Hadramaut were not on friendly terms. Since the Yemenites were the stronger, they occasionally entered Hadramaut, but on the other hand they refused to tolerate the entry of Hadramaut people into their country. No Hadramaut Bedouin would have dared to pass into the forbidden land, especially in company with an unbeliever, knowing that it would probably cost him his life. My only chance of a guide was to find a Yemenite, but neither love nor money would produce one.

At first I set my hopes on a distinguished Yemen Sayed who had been staying at Abu Bakr's court, presumably to transact business. He had come by the sea route, *via* Hodeida and Makalla. I told him of my plans, which he heard with enthusiasm, and he assured me that the route which I proposed to take had always held an attraction for him; that he would come with me; and that in his company I would encounter no difficulties. We passed long hours discussing in detail how the project should be put into practice. But when the time came for prep-

arations to be carried out he began to take alarm, and finally he elected to return by the safer sea route. All that I could do was to continue patiently to hope that some lucky chance would send a Yemen Bedouin in my direction.

However, the long period of waiting in Terim was not without its little changes and excitements. Among other things I witnessed what the natives regarded as something of a miracle, though we should have called it a very ordinary occurrence. Throughout the day an unbearable sultriness had lain over the desert city, causing even its own inhabitants, accustomed as they were to great heat, to take cover inside their houses. Deadly-silent streets lay bathed in the scorching sun. Late in the afternoon the sky suddenly darkened; black clouds gathered; a pitiless sandstorm broke loose; and almost immediately a real, honest-to-goodness tropical thunderstorm was upon us. Flash followed flash in unbroken succession, and successive peals of thunder caused a veritable pandemonium. Then came the rain, in a downpour such as the natives had not witnessed for a generation. In a short time the city was flooded.

Since most of the houses are built of clay it is not difficult to imagine the appearance which Terim presented on the following morning. Seventeen houses had completely collapsed; the city walls were almost entirely in ruins; the numerous streams had overrun their banks. Abu Bakr's palace was a sorry sight: brown streams of muddy water trickled down the beautifully-decorated walls, and in many places the roof had caved in.

But what were such minor inconveniences against the rare and rich bounty of heaven? The event became the

occasion for public rejoicing. At no other time have I seen such scenes of joy and merrymaking in an Arabian town. All left their houses, and young and old disported themselves in the streams of water which flowed through the streets. They simply could not make too much of their gladness at an abundance of the element which they valued almost more than anything in life. Those who owned gardens hastened out of doors and diverted the streams of water to the roots of their plants. A few hours later, owing to the power of the tropical heat, fresh green shoots were to be seen everywhere.

Through the kindness of Abu Bakr al Kaff I had an opportunity of making a small expedition into the eastern part of Hadramaut, a part which had not before been visited by any European. I was accompanied by a Bedouin and Omar, the servant who went with me on my former journey; and in addition, a donkey and a camel were at my disposal. There was no need for a strong escort, as I was under the protection of the mighty Al Kaffs. We followed through the valley of the Wadi Adim and touched the cities of Enet and Qasam. Ancient ruins were everywhere, covering a far larger area than do the settlements which are at present populated. Where large buildings are still standing astonishment is at once aroused by the elegance and fine taste of their architecture.

The city of Qasam, for instance, contains magnificent palaces and a jewel of a city gate, its brown clay bricks artistically ornamented in white. There was no doubt that these ruins were the cultural remains of a richly-

gifted people, a people with proud traditions to preserve. As time progressed there evidently was a lowering of the standard of living. A large portion of the inhabitants of Hadramaut—probably the pick of them—left in early times for the Malay Isles where they became successful colonizers. In Java and Sumatra, too, the Mohammedans, most of whom came from Hadramaut, are an energetic section of the population. In general the urge to travel and explore is as keenly felt by the Arabs as it is by the Northern races. Long before the Europeans they established possessions in Africa and the Far East which remained theirs for centuries. And it is noteworthy that Arabian influence in Central Africa is steadily on the increase.

El Furt was another place at which the ruins covered a far greater area than the part which is at present populated. We spent the night there in a tall, slender mud house, the property of a Bedouin. All the male members of the family were present at the evening meal. Seated in a circle, on straw mats, a giant dish of rice and *Lacham* (dried shark meat) on the ground in the centre of the circle, the diners helped themselves to the food, using their right hands. To eat with the left hand is considered the essence of awkwardness.

As I was a guest, and my host wanted to do me special honour, the master of the house, having first scrupulously licked his own brown fingers clean, formed the rice into small balls which he personally placed in my mouth. It was only at the cost of great effort that I could swallow food which had been treated in that rude fashion.

When the men had eaten their fill the women were

permitted to take what was left, which they ate in another room. It is a gross breach of decency and custom for the two sexes to eat at the same table. And this rule is as strictly observed in the Bedouin's tent as it is in the Sultan's palace.

Before we retired for the night my host dropped several dark hints about some mystery which he was guarding. On the next morning he drew me aside and confided in me that I could earn a lot of money if I would do him a favour. When I requested the details he told me the following: In El Furt there was an old castle, now a ruin, whose last owner had, in a questionable and suspected unlawful manner, gathered great riches. The other inhabitants murdered him, but the money which they expected to discover could not be found. The treasure must have been buried somewhere under the building. Local people feared to dig for it, as the place was haunted by evil spirits who would wreak awful vengeance on them.

In brief, the worthy Bedouins saw in my presence a favourable chance to gain possession of the long-desired treasure. I would have no difficulty in finding out where the booty was hidden, so said my host, and for my trouble there would be a generous reward of nine *real* (a little over \$2.00).

Despite the attractive remuneration I felt bound to disappoint him. Somehow their dubious treasure hunt failed to appeal to me, and so I told them that, although I was an unbeliever, I had no reasons for assuming that the evil spirits would make any distinction between me and them. While thanking them for giving me the opportunity I was reluctantly obliged to decline their offer.



Our route took us as far as Husn el Urr in East Hadramaut. There, on a great rock, we found the ruins of an enormous castle built of hewn stone. Its date was hard to guess at. In the method of construction and in the arrangement of the rooms it reminded one of the Mycenaean ruins. To what extent resemblance to early Greek culture is to be found here will have to be the subject of later exploration.

On the return we met with another example of how the religious customs of all the races have a remarkable similarity—at least, in so far as outward form is concerned. At Dar el Qoz, a small village, where a very friendly reception awaited us, the inhabitants had made the habit of fixing a wild goat's horns to the house.

I was reminded of the old Saxons, who used to terminate the gables on their houses with the figure of a horse's head.

In both cases the custom had its origin in religion. The goat is a sacred animal and the symbol of a certain deity. Incidentally, its form is often noticed on ancient Sheban altars. Quite probably it symbolized the Babylonian Moon God who was also worshipped to some extent in Southern Arabia. And to us Europeans the Goat is familiar as one of the signs of the Zodiac.

When I returned to Terim I was forced to recognize the hopelessness of making any further efforts to carry through my plans there. I was advised to abandon them, advice which I very nearly followed, for the year was advancing and it would have been out of the question to attempt a crossing of the desert in the height of summer.

There remained one thing to be tried, and I decided to push on to Shibam, which lay farther to the west. For I had heard that Yemen Bedouins occasionally came to that town. If that hope let me down, then I would have to admit myself beaten.

## IV.

### Ruba al Khali

FAR beyond the walls of the City of Terim there lies in the desert a small, inconspicuous cemetery. Amid the rocks of the wadi it is hardly recognizable; a couple of fairly large tombstones are all that now mark its existence.

It is the last resting-place of Hadramaut warriors who, in a Bedouin war that took place some years ago, fell in the defence of Terim. During that war the Wadi was occupied by the warring troops, and communications with the big cities of Seyun and Shibam were cut off. In order to re-establish touch with Seyun a road was built over a high range of hills, and the scene of hostilities was avoided. (The Wadi, with the mountain arm which juts out into its centre, is shaped like a bent knee. The belligerents were in the Wadi of Terim.) My present route was over this newly-built mountain road.

Our party, consisting of a soldier, a Bedouin, a donkey, a camel, and myself, required a half-day to surmount this obstacle with its fantastic rock formations. We regained the Wadi shortly before sunset and stayed the night in Tariba, a small fortified town, in the house of a Sayed to whom Al Kaff had given me a letter of intro-

duction. I was received with princely hospitality. The balcony, situated high above the roofs of the other houses, was mine for the night, and elegant rugs and cushions were used in the making of my bed. There I lay partaking of food and drink with my distinguished, intelligent and quiet-mannered hosts.

Some distance away, in the semi-darkness, sat several Bedouins, coal-black, splendid figures with flowing black manes, who listened to our conversation. Whenever a question was addressed to any one of them, the man replied quietly and modestly. I can still see the young Bedouin before me as he joined in our talk quietly, but with self-confidence and poise. In each of his movements there was an aristocratic elegance the like of which I had never seen before. Yet he was an ordinary man of the desert. Sangis was his name.

Suddenly our peaceful chat was rudely disturbed by the sound of rifle shots. "Malesh, no matter, it's only a little war," I was told. The City of Tariba, it seemed, was in a state of feud with a neighbouring tribe. Ownership of certain wells was in dispute, and minor skirmishes were a regular nightly occurrence.

Several of the hostile Bedouins had houses close to the city, and shots were exchanged from window to window. Actually we were protected from stray bullets by the high balustrade of the balcony.

In Hadramaut these tribal feuds are so ordinary that the sultans and the nobility take scarcely any notice of them. They usually follow the principle that it is best to mind one's own business. In the previous year I had passed this way without seeing actual fighting. But, later on my way to Seyun, I came across several ruined vil-

lages which in the previous year had been peaceful enough.

I was the victim of a minor "incident" during my short stay in the City of Seyun. While wandering through the town to take some photographs, a horde of children who had followed me for some way through the streets smilingly were posing for me when a car suddenly drew into the narrow alley. The children quickly scattered, the car halted as it reached me, and before I had a chance to realize what was happening I was snatched up, planted in the middle of a number of Arabs, and carried off.

"You are a foreigner, an Alman,," they stated in explanation, "that means you're an engineer, and so we want you to repair our pump. It has been out of order for two years, and we haven't been able to get any water out of the well."

My earnest assurances that I knew nothing whatever of engineering, pumps and suchlike contraptions were not of the slightest use. To them a European was an engineer just as every European is a doctor. I had already learned that a refusal to render medical aid would arouse considerable indignation. The foreigner generally escapes his predicament by administering some harmless medicine, which he may happen to be carrying with him, and which he knows will not produce any injurious effects. Curiously enough (or perhaps it is not so very remarkable) the treatment usually works the desired cure, for the reason that the patients place absolute faith in the efficacy of the treatment.

We soon reached an extensive palm plantation on the fringe of the city, and very dried-up it looked, too. The

owner, I learned, was Sayed Hud, a rich and powerful member of the Seyun nobility, and the Baby Austin which had been used for my abduction was driven by one of his young relations. They took me to the pump which was connected to a big tractor by a long driving-belt. After much effort we succeeded in starting the engine, but as soon as the revolutions increased the driving-band slipped off the wheel. That, they said, was what always happened, and they had tried all ways without being able to remedy the defect.

No vast technical knowledge was necessary to enable one to detect where the fault lay. The heavy tractor had not been anchored securely enough and stood on a different level from the pump, consequently the belt came off. Following my directions workmen were summoned and the tractor was correctly and securely fixed in position. Several hours passed before the work was done, but as soon as we started up the engine, lo! the pump which had lain idle for two years was again put into service, and up came the water. That night, in the garden restored to life, Sayed Hud and his people held a celebration. Young and old arrived from the city to gaze upon the miracle which the "Almani" had produced.

In Shibam I enjoyed the hospitality of my old friend, Hussein Abu Bakr Lahyam. He, in common with all my other old friends, showed me great kindness, but the moment I began to speak of my plan he shook his head and pronounced it to be impossible.

However, at the eleventh hour a lucky chance came to my aid. Several days had passed, and I was wandering aimlessly through the city, in a despairing mood and on

the point of giving up all hope. I had arrived at the *Suk*, the market square, when I saw the tax collector in conversation with some Bedouins who were evidently strangers to the region. The tax collector knew me, and when I asked him about the other men he told me that they were Beni Agil Bedouins and that they came from Harib, the first important town on the other side of the Yemen frontier. They had come by caravan to Shibam to sell some of their home products: in this case they were black and white rugs very closely and beautifully woven from goats' hair; the patterns were elegant and simple. Rug-making is unknown in Hadramaut itself.

Overjoyed at this lucky encounter, I explained my plan to the Yemenites and declared my intention of enlisting the services of one of them as a guide. At first they showed little enthusiasm, for there was none who cared to shoulder the responsibility of Bedouin law by which the man to whom a stranger is entrusted is responsible with his own life for his charge's safety. And the area through which we would have to pass on our way to San'a was known for the hostility which its inhabitants bore towards anyone who was the possessor of a white skin. However, the persuasive powers of the tax collector, whose friendship they keenly desired to cultivate (on account of his position to treat them generously in the matter of taxes), combined with the relatively high sum (to them, at all events) of approximately \$40 which I offered, caused an undersized individual with a long white beard, a crafty-looking rascal named Sale, to announce his willingness to act as my guide. I then arranged details with him (he was to guide me as far as San'a) and paid over the sum upon which we

had agreed. It was all the money that I had. There would be no more until I reached San'a, where I could obtain a fresh supply through the agency of a Greek merchant in Aden. Perhaps it was just as well, as there would be no inducement to anyone to rob me during the journey.

It transpired that I had made the arrangements just in time, for the Bedouins intended setting out on their return on the next day, and no further caravans were expected to arrive from Yemen, as during the summer all travel through the desert ceases.

At four o'clock on the following afternoon, the appointed hour (a start is never made until the heat begins to diminish), instead of my man Sale, his brother turned up. Ambarak, which was his name, also was a small man with a long white beard. This change caused me considerable surprise, until Ambarak explained that his brother had gone on ahead with the caravan, and that we were to join them at a certain water-hole on the morrow.

The camel which was to carry me to San'a was loaded up with my baggage: two boxes containing cameras and photographic materials, a folding camp-bed, a carpet, a rug and a bag containing coffee, tea, biscuits and tins of preserved fruit, on which I was to live during the three weeks spent in crossing the desert. I climbed on to the top of my miscellaneous articles of luggage and made myself as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances. The camel clambered to its feet, and we shuffled on our way.

I had almost been forced by illness to abandon the journey. On the night before I had been suddenly attacked by dysentery, that tropical malady so feared by all Europeans, probably caused by the bad, saline water



of Shibam. The fever increased so rapidly that when we were ready to start I found myself almost unable to stand. But whatever happened I did not intend to miss the unique chance which the caravan to Yemen brought me, and, moreover, I intended to conceal the fact that I was ill, otherwise the others would not have allowed me to travel. In that condition to spend hour after hour, cross-legged and erect, on the back of a hard-paced camel was a very painful experience. I had to summon every ounce of strength to prevent myself from collapsing. To make things worse, the Bedouins are in the habit, at the commencement of a journey, while the camels are still fresh, of pushing forward as hard as they can go. To a European who is unused to the mode of travel it is very exacting. Later on, when man and beast are more or less exhausted, the pace is eased and the rest-pauses become longer. For four days I had to fight the illness, which I eventually overcame, thanks to that excellent remedy, emetin.

We passed through a broad valley with its friendly settlements. For long after we had left there stood sharply silhouetted against the horizon the skyscraper city of Shibam, which, as the distance which separated us increased, gradually took on the form of a uniform brown mass crowned by the white tops of the tallest palaces, tinted gold in the light of the setting sun. Then the city disappeared in the violet haze of the tropical evening sky.

At nightfall we reached El Qatan, the last place of importance before entering the desert. Nearby lies the Castle of El Hauta, the summer seat of the Sultan of Shibam, one of those feudal princes who share in the

government of Hadramaut and who trace their ancestry back to the times of Mohammed. But their power is rapidly on the wane, despite the splendour and imposing character of their immediate surroundings. In Southern Arabia, too, the movement in the direction of Arabian unity is making itself felt, and with it all these small princes, like their predecessors in the West in days gone by, are being gradually forced to step aside, save where the interests of some foreign Power artificially prolong their existence.

Sultan Ali had a friendly regard for me, owing to the fact that in the previous year I had cured him of a severe attack of dysentery. I did not wish to pass on without paying him a visit, but Ambarak, in his capacity as guide, was strongly against delaying our journey, as he feared that we might not catch up with the caravan. He would not give his consent until I had made him a solemn promise not to stay in El Hauta longer than one hour.

That hour spent at the Sultan's castle was my leave-taking of the world which I knew. As if for the last time I entered its comfortably furnished rooms, reclined on the silk cushions, and enjoyed the tea and sweetmeats which were served to me by the Sultan's richly-robed giant of a body-servant, who, ever since I had restored his master to health, had treated me with a sort of maternal concern.

The kind old Sultan vainly summoned all his eloquence to attempt to dissuade me from my plan. While he spoke I could feel his eyes resting sadly on me, as if he were convinced that he would never see me again alive. But seeing that I was determined to proceed, he decided to help me as best he could, and he gave me a

letter to the tribal chief of Harib. The letter never reached its destination. When I arrived in Harib I found that the city had shortly before been captured by Yemen troops and that the aged Sheikh had been carried away to a prison in San'a. Learning that, I doubted the advisability of mentioning the letter, which I kept carefully concealed. There was little doubt that it would have been regarded as evidence that I stood in the service of a foreign power and had come for purposes of espionage, of which I was later accused.

The Sultan's servant came with me as far as the city gate of El Qatan, where Ambarak was waiting. We rode on through the night, not halting until shortly before sunrise. The moment we dismounted, I wrapped myself in my rug, and, shaken with fever, lay down on the sand to sleep. But hardly had I fallen asleep than I was rudely shaken, and our hasty journey was continued.

Towards mid-day we reached the village of Sheradyan, which consisted of a few scattered Bedouin huts of wretched appearance. It was here that we were supposed to catch up with the caravan, but it had left before our arrival. The well of Sheradyan was the last we would meet in the next seven days. Accordingly all available vessels were filled with water and no less than two of our three camels were used as water-carriers. The well water, when fresh, tasted good enough, but after it had been in the goat-skins, in which it was carried, it had a flavour which reminded one of rotten meat, and, naturally, that flavour grew more pronounced the longer the water stayed in the skins. A liking for this foul brew is an ac-

quired taste, but with a raging thirst it is acquired readily enough!

We continued in the early evening, and followed through the wide Wadi Duchr, which gradually loses itself in the desert. Quickly the northern wall of the Wadi grew invisible, while the southern wall was just a faint strip in the distance. Again we rode through the night without halt. Ambarak repeatedly urged greater speed, for fear that we should fail to catch the caravan.

Eventually, as dawn drew near, we came across several camels, whose long, coarse lips were busy with the sparse vegetation which happened to be there. Their numbers grew, and Ambarak gave vent to a sigh of relief: we had reached the encampment. I looked in vain for Sale. It turned out that he had stayed behind in Shibam, and he had good reasons for doing that. He had deliberately pushed forward his brother, for the latter had not made a contract with me, and according to Bedouin rules he was not responsible for me to his tribe. On arrival in Yemen, had he been asked "What do you mean by bringing a foreigner into the country?" he could have replied with an easy conscience, "A foreigner? I did not know that. My brother put me in charge of a certain Abdallah" (the Arab name which I had assumed). Apart from that Ambarak proved to be an excellent guide, who looked after me to the best of his ability and who faithfully carried out the obligations which he had taken over from his brother.

We were now in the Ruba al Khali, that huge high desert which extends across the whole of the eastern side of the Arabian peninsula, from Yemen in the south to the

Persian Gulf in the north. On the map of Arabia it is a great blank space, unknown and unexplored. It is the region of deserts, the "empty quarter" (as its name states), ruled by no prince, held by none of the Powers, a no-man's-land, a boundless sea of sand and stone, but for all that not uninhabited.

Bachr es Safi, the sea of sand, as this part of the Ruba al Khali is called, was the part which we had now reached. This Bachr es Safi is an enormous, real, deep sea covered by sand. So say the Bedouins. Bedouin reports also state that whole caravans have been lost, swallowed up in the sand. But wherever there is the smallest prospect of existence—especially where the country is undulating and Nature provides just enough moisture for the cattle to find some sort of grazing and for a little corn to be grown—there are human settlements, small, lost outposts beyond the fringe of the world proper. Possibly in the course of time the settlers will disappear, or perhaps they will remain and even increase their holdings, if the climate will permit it.

In many cases they represent the last of a large and powerful tribe, but more frequently they have been forced to leave their original homes through overcrowding. They live as isolated lives as if they were on small islands, far from the rest of the world, owing allegiance to no one. Their struggle for existence has given them a particularly strong community sense which renders them extremely hostile to strangers. Children of Nature, they have inherited a deeply-rooted aversion for all who belong to a foreign race. They regard such men as a species of outlaw protected neither by the law of the desert nor by the dictates of religion. As the first white man to cross

the southern part of the Ruba al Khali I was to receive proof of that fact.

The Ruba al Khali harbours another sort of human-being: the Bedouin outlaw, who for some severe crime has been banned from the community of his tribe. As was once the case among the Northern races, it is the worst punishment that can be meted out to the Bedouin. An outlaw ceases officially to exist, and in confirmation of this a stone pile is erected on the burial place of his tribe, as if he were dead and buried. The worst crime, one which is bound to be followed by banishment, is the violation of a woman. For, in a community which is entirely founded on bonds of blood, the woman, as fountain-head and upholder of the tribe, is specially guarded and her honour is inviolable.

These homeless and lawless ones can find sanctuary only in deserts like the Ruba al Khali. There they join forces with others in similar plight, and bend their energies to the only possibility of an existence which remains to them: mendicancy and robbery, two occupations which go hand in hand in civilized countries, too. No one knows where and how they are housed; they appear suddenly and vanish again with equal suddenness into their desert strongholds. With their racing camels, which are an indispensable possession, they are able to cover great distances; and they have an unfailing capacity for scenting any caravan which may pass within their reach.

Our caravan, split up into small groups, advanced on a wide front. Each group consisted of a chain of seven or eight camels, linked by rope which passed from head to tail between the animals.

There is something utterly strange about these "ships of the desert." Unlike horses, it is impossible to establish any sort of friendly relationship with them. Setting about their work with a quiet patience, they seem permanently enveloped in a cloud of despondency. One might almost say that they hate being camels, while at the same time they regard with contempt all other living creatures, mankind included. Moaning and groaning are their only outward expressions of feeling. When they are being loaded, or urged to rise, they display anger, show their teeth, or try to bite the man who has lavished care upon them. At other times, though, when called upon to make special efforts, their lamentations are heart-rending.

And with all their grotesque ugliness—the hare-lip, the unsightly hump, the thick, gristly growths on their over-long legs and the evil odour which they exude—their sad eyes, shaded with long, drooping lashes, are undeniably beautiful. Generally they present an appearance of absent-mindedness, as if thinking to themselves, completely oblivious to all that is happening around them. Occasionally I have known them suddenly to turn their heads round and look the rider straight in the eye. At such times their expression is one of deep melancholy, mingled with complaint and contempt. I know of nothing which is more disturbing.

For a while our path led through the last of the foothills. Like ocean waves on reaching the shore, they gradually diminished in size and finally spent themselves in the huge desert plain which spread itself before us as far as the eye could see. The ground was of hard, dry clay, with broad stretches of loose sand. Where the surface of

the ground was hard, parallel tracks were plainly visible. They had been formed by the foot-prints of the innumerable camels which had passed that way through a period of many centuries.

It was here that the age-old caravan route, in use since times immemorable, passed on its way from the Southern Arabian coast to Yemen and the North. But even where for mile after mile loose, changing sand had obliterated all tracks, the Bedouins confidently held their course, and not once did they hesitate about the correctness of their way. Necessity has developed in them a truly remarkable sense of direction. To take the wrong path in a waterless desert means certain death.

Day after day we spent sixteen hours in the saddle. As soon as day dawned the Bedouins would start their curious, monotonous sing-song, with its long-drawn-out rhythm, the effect of which is so strange on the unaccustomed ear.

But all voices grew silent the moment the sun appeared over the horizon to renew with its fierce rays the torture of man and beast. Like a procession of silent shadows we journeyed on, an occasional, hoarse shout to the camels being the only sound to break the stillness. In the eternal sameness, with no change in the ground and no tree or bush to relieve the monotony, one quickly lost all sense of time and, indeed, all sense of space in any form. One had no idea where he was, and the hour, the day, the month mattered no longer. Everything was confused and vague.

The hard light, cruelly reflected by the sand-crystals, stabbed painfully at already inflamed eyes. The limbs ached horribly, and general pain increased until, finally,



one developed into a state of physical insensibility. The senses, though, were fully on the alert. Without warning the eyes would rest on an imaginary object which took the form of a house. At a second glance it had vanished, and there appeared in its place a faint-grey, dancing haze. At other times one would be startled by the sudden appearance of a column of dust, which raised itself to man's height, threw out two arms, executed a sort of spiral dance, and went, suddenly to appear again at some other point.

The Bedouins watched nervously; they believed that the column of dust harboured the form of an evil spirit. To them the desert is the home of all manner of spirits: the spirits of deceased persons, demons of this earth and beings of another world. One is almost disposed to concede that they are not so very far wrong. An Arab, by the way, never whistles, as he believes that this attracts the attention of the spirits to himself.

When the sun's fiery orb sank beyond the evening horizon and day suddenly changed into night, there was a sensation as if one were waking from a delirious dream. The physical numbness went, and nervous tension relaxed. When the night encampment had been established, when man and beast had settled down to rest, when everything had grown quiet and when objects near and remote lay bathed in the soft blue light of the stars (very close and incredibly big they seemed to us), a faint, rising and falling sound became perceptible. It was the sand on the dunes, fanned and set in motion by the gentle breeze.

It was a reminder of the mysterious life that exists in the desert which one had imagined to be lifeless. Consciousness of this life appealed more to the instinct than

to the senses. One began to comprehend why the imaginations of the Arabs and other races people these uninhabited areas with the beings of another world.

A European, too, quickly falls beneath the charm exerted by the influences of earth and heaven which manifest themselves in these parts. And there is another thing which becomes apparent. One is so cut off from all contact with the world that he is all the more conscious of the presence of the supernatural and suddenly remembers that the birthplace of the two greatest world religions was in the land of deserts, and the explanation of the coincidence is at once clear.

One evening, after it had grown dark and before the moon had risen, as the caravan with silent tread continued in deep silence on its long day's march through the desert, I turned to my neighbour and was about to ask some question, when he quickly stopped me.

"*Lussan, Lussan!* don't speak," he whispered in great agitation. "Robbers are close at hand."

I scanned the horizon, but in the gathering darkness could see nothing which aroused my suspicion. But when we came to a halt and the fire had been lighted, a sudden shout from the caravan leader brought us to our feet, and we quickly seized rifles and took cover behind the tethered camels. Soon dim shadows became visible in the darkness, and a number of men mounted on fast-trotting camels approached us.

They undoubtedly had intended to rob us, but when they saw that we were well-prepared for their reception and, moreover, that we had a numerical superiority, they dismounted, made signs that their mission was a peace-

ful one, and asked for hospitality. They were given water and bread, and seated themselves round the fire, and conversed as if we were the best of friends before disappearing into the night, as silently as they had arrived.

From that time they never left our tracks. As soon as twilight came, they appeared somewhere on the horizon, dark shadows which appeared first at one place, then at another, like famished wolves seeking a favourable opportunity to pounce on their prey. On one occasion these highly unwelcome guests honoured us with their company during the mid-day pause, and they stayed with us until we left again. They sat round in a half-circle and questioned me, the white man, about all manner of things. Meanwhile the Bedouins were busying themselves with the camels, preparing them for the journey, and had left their weapons behind, as a matter of fact within reach of the robbers, who held theirs in their hands. It would have been an easy matter for our guests to have seized the rifles and to have pounced upon us. But the enemy had been received as a guest, and in no circumstances may the position of guest be abused. And one may confidently rely on that knowledge. Even these outlaws, despised by their fellows, respected this law of the desert.

After six days spent in travel through a totally uninhabited part of the desert our caravan approached the mountains which lie at the fringe of the Ruba al Khali. The soil began to bear a sparse vegetation, a sign that a certain amount of moisture was at hand. And where this first requisite of existence is found one may be sure of finding human habitations, no matter how hard other cir-

cumstances of life may be. We soon came to the Bedouin settlement which bears the name of Shobua. It was mid-day and the sun's rays were almost vertical. He who was accustomed to a milder clime saw in the huts, which were visible in the distance, a rare chance to secure a brief respite from the tortures of heat and glare. But in that expectation he was disappointed.

## V.

### In Ancient Sheba

WHILE I was still watching with eager anticipation the far-off huts of the village, the caravan suddenly altered its course and described a big curve round Shobua. Later I heard that the inhabitants of this district were more than ordinarily hostile to strangers, and my companions were not going to risk entering the place in the company of a white infidel. A very similar experience greeted me beyond Shobua, near the village of Erma. Our mid-day rest was taken at a respectful distance from the village; and while I went and hid in a bush two of our company proceeded to the village to fetch water. As soon as they arrived back we took a couple of quick gulps of the fresh liquid and then departed in haste.

We now followed through a wadi, a very shallow one, only distinguishable as an old dried river bed winding through relatively abundant undergrowth. The seventy camels, roped head-to-tail, wandered in a long single-file column; my own camel brought up the rear. En route we met local people, men, women and children, with their camels. The men returned the greetings of their like-coloured compatriots in the caravan, completely ignoring me.

I was just reflecting that, after all, the people did not seem to be so remarkably unfriendly, when another Bedouin happened our way. He passed to the end of the column, where I was seated high up on my camel-back throne, with head bent forward (as if I were asleep) in order not to attract attention unnecessarily.

As he caught sight of me he seemed momentarily surprised, but quickly recovering, he stepped towards me and, without speaking a word, untied my camel from the caravan, led it to the side, and then dashed off at full speed dragging the camel after him, with me on top. My companions had seen nothing of what had taken place. When we had gone some distance my new acquaintance slowed down, finally stopped, and gave me to understand that, as a white man, I had no business to be travelling through his district; camel and baggage belonged to him; I, the stranger, would be treated in a manner which the country's custom prescribed. And saying that, he drew a dagger which he flourished in a highly significant way.

At this point it is well to mention that throughout my expedition I went unarmed, and for two reasons. As soon as the Bedouins guess that the foreigner is carrying a weapon their normal suspicions are greatly increased, and they try by all means to wrest it from his possession. Either they beg monotonously and importunately until for the sake of peace he hands it to them, or they simply pick his pocket. And, in any case, a lone stranger is absolutely powerless to defend himself against crowds of Bedouins once they become openly hostile. If, in a moment of danger, he were to make use of a weapon and one of the natives were to be struck down, he would automatically fall a prey to the avengers of bloodshed,

from whom there is no escape. Moreover, one's escorts are invariably armed, and that generally suffices in an emergency. At all events I can confidently claim that in making a practice of going abroad unarmed I made a wise decision.

Finding myself threatened I jumped down from the camel and shouted vigorously for my companions. They, however, had already noticed what had occurred, and came up at the double. My abductor took to his heels, still leading the camel with my baggage. After a long search we found him behind some bushes making a thorough inspection of my belongings. Ambarak rushed at the man with a bared dagger. The thief defended himself, with his left hand tightly clasped about my Leica, as if it were some article of priceless value, though it is certain that he cannot have known what he was holding. Perhaps he regarded the camera as some mysterious form of weapon.

After a preliminary skirmish, in the course of which no one suffered any injury, the opponent sides declared their willingness to open negotiations. The *pourparlers* lasted for hours, until, finally, the man agreed to surrender the baggage, having decided, after a thorough search, that it contained no money. There remained the question of ownership of the Leica to be settled, and settlement was at last achieved on paying the man one *real* (about a quarter) as compensation, whereupon he handed back the camera.

Having lost half the day as the result of this incident our march was continued at a sharper pace, so that we might escape as soon as possible from the inhospitable dis-

trict of Shobua and Erma. But we were to receive other visitors, and singularly disagreeable visitors they were, too. Four Shobua Bedouins overtook us and announced their intention of accompanying our caravan as far as Behan. One of them was particularly objectionable. Mounted on a very aged camel, with long, lean legs swinging past the animal's sides, he seemed to find me the subject of great amusement, and he pointed his finger at me and repeated his characterization of me many times.

"What a comic-looking man!" he chuckled. "He has white skin!"

I thought to myself that if the fellow were suddenly to wander into some European town he would cut an even more comic figure. Furthermore, he stank of putrid mutton fat, with which he had anointed his extremely unprepossessing person. For that reason alone it was highly unpleasant to travel long in his neighbourhood.

On the following day we entered a desert of pure sand, for which the Arabic name is "Ramla." The dunes of loose sand looked from the distance like mountains, and in the early morning cast long shadows. It was the last stretch of arid and barren country through which we were to pass and it was the hardest part of the whole journey. Man and beast were already very exhausted by the long marches, and the continual climbing and descending of the dunes, through deep, loose sand, took away their last strength. At the time the rate of our progress was in no degree lessened; nor were the rest periods lengthened.

On account of the restricted supply of water which we carried it was absolutely essential to hold to the travel



schedule, which allowed us four days in which to cross this part of the desert. Any delay might mean doom to the whole caravan. If a man went down from exhaustion he was tied to one of the camels and dragged along. We had with us three half-grown youths who were on their first long caravan journey. It was easy to see how it was for them, though their determination to reveal themselves as true Bedouins carried them through.

Occasionally it happened that one of the camels would become so exhausted that it halted and refused to move on. At such times the Bedouins took a long, stout needle, which they used in sewing the camel-sacks, and with it pierced the animal's nostrils until they bled. A piece of string was then threaded through the wound and attached to the halter, which, of course, was joined to the next animal's tail. As soon as the latter moved on the rope tightened and the string tore at the sensitive nostrils; pain drove the exhausted camel forward.

The same method was employed whenever the camel showed signs of stopping again. It was horrible to have to listen to the wretched brute's screams as his nose was being pierced. Admittedly it was an extremely gruesome proceeding; but on the other hand one had repeated opportunities of observing the affection and care which the Bedouins lavish upon their animals.

It happened on several occasions that a camel developed some sort of gastric disorder which completely incapacitated it. For some days the parched vegetation, which is always to be found in the hilly districts, had been entirely missing, and the camels had gone without their accustomed food. The Bedouins promptly concocted a medicine to deal with this malady: a salt lye

was prepared in a special vessel, and the solution was poured in generous quantities down the throat of the sick animal—regardless of the fact that hardly enough water remained for human needs and that every drop was precious. Sometimes the treatment was successful, sometimes it failed.

In the case of failure the owner, having abandoned his camel, rejoined the caravan, which continued its march without stop. We lost four camels in this way. The beasts lay where they fell, to die slowly and painfully, for it was not permitted to put a sudden end to their sufferings by killing them. Mohammedan law forbids the slaughter of any animal which is not required for food. Islamic philosophy, too, teaches men to find a slow death more desirable than a quick one. The believer quietly prepares himself to die; almost he seems to enjoy his gradual departure from this life.

Towards noon on the fourth day we came in sight of the beginning of a valley between the sand dunes, along which our way led. Continuing to widen, it gradually forced the desert dunes aside, and they receded more and more to left and right of us. Now we began to see vegetation in the valley and, though at first it was somewhat sparse, it became fairly abundant as we advanced further.

Though the caravan was at the last stages of exhaustion and carried on with the utmost difficulty, there grew noticeable a certain increased animation. An extra effort was made to push forward with speed. The tired animals raised their heads from time to time and blew out their nostrils as if they scented salvation; men's faces (what

was visible of them beneath the voluminous hoods) showed an expression of mingled gladness and relief. For the worst part of the journey was over. Apart from the loss of four camels our journey across the desert proper had been accomplished without mishap. The terrors of the Ruba al Khali lay behind us. We had gained our first goal: the Wadi Behan, as the valley through which we were passing was known. We had arrived in inhabited parts, and we were not to leave them again.

The Wadi Behan immediately joins Yemen territory. And its population, like its vegetation, is thin. There is no unbroken line of villages and towns such as is found in Hadramaut, on the other side of the Ruba al Khali. Wretched mud huts distributed at random through the broad valley had the appearance of temporary settlements rather than that of established habitations.

Unfortunately, the Mass'aben tribe, whose members form the majority of the inhabitants of the Wadi Behan, were at feud with the Beni Agil tribe, to whom the Bedouins in our caravan belonged. What had caused them to become enemies I could not learn; possibly the fact that they were neighbours made it hard for them to be friends, a strange state of affairs which is not altogether unknown in civilized lands.

So as the caravan reached the first huts of the Mass'aben it diverted its route and continued without a word being passed between the members of the two hostile clans. We halted two hours later, as it began to grow dark, at a remote-lying well. For the first time in days we were able to satisfy our thirst, with clean, fresh water, a joy which has to be experienced before one can fully appreciate it. My camp-bed was quickly assembled

and I was soon fast asleep. But it was not long before my peace was disturbed. Several Mass'aben, it appeared, had discovered our camp. An attack was feared, and so we had to be moving on. After a long search in the dark we found a small hollow shaded by high sand dunes, which provided a safe refuge. There we passed what remained of the night.

At an early hour on the following morning I was aroused by my companions, who were anxious to depart as speedily as possible from this inhospitable district. But that did not suit my plans. Wadi Behan is ruled by a sultan whose possessions are reckoned as belonging to the hinterland of Aden. He, therefore, stands beneath the protection of a Great Power and, consequently, is guarded from the ambitious attentions of the King of Yemen, whose aspirations in recent times have steadily increased.

I wanted to pay a visit to this sultan. And there was another thing which attracted me. Behan, nowadays a thinly-populated area, half-buried in sand, was once a flourishing province in the old Sheban kingdom, and it still bears the reputation of containing rich remains of ancient culture. Despite the unfriendly attitude of the local people I was unwilling to miss the opportunity of inspecting some of the ruins at closer quarters.

When I announced my intention there was a considerable uproar, and the argument lasted about an hour. My Bedouins stoutly refused to go near the capital of Behan, for they feared evil consequences to themselves. Finally, when I obstinately insisted on carrying out my plan, Ambarak, who felt responsible for my safety, said that he was willing to accompany me. The other members of

the caravan went their way, and we arranged to meet them at a certain spot outside Behan on the following day. Meanwhile we rode in the direction of the capital.

Past and present existed side by side in sharp contrast. Before us stood a high, flat-domed hill which was formed by the ruins of an ancient royal palace. At one time it was a famous palace standing in the centre of the many splendid buildings of old Behan. High up on the hills stood the residence of the present sultan, an old tumble-down castellated edifice, which, as we later discovered, possessed precisely two rooms.

The Sultan of Behan was probably the poorest of his rank to be found anywhere in the world. He lived on milk and bread; he could not even afford to buy meat. And below his house stood a mean collection of mud huts: the Capital of Behan.

Rather dubious of the reception which awaited us, we rode towards the hill, myself mounted on top of the heavily-laden camel. Not a living creature revealed itself as we continued our climb. But as we reached the summit some thirty Bedouins suddenly rushed out of the castle and hurried in our direction. They were the Sultan's soldiers (apparently his entire army) each of whom was armed with a rifle and a dagger, although other equipment was conspicuous by its absence.

In an instant we were surrounded, and a wild shooting and shouting began. However, it was soon evident that the shots were not fired in anger; on the contrary we were being greeted with a *feu-de-joie*. The salute cost each soldier a couple of bullets—a very signal honour to be paid to us, bearing in mind the high cost of munitions in these parts. It later transpired that we had been taken

for the emissaries of a foreign power, who had to be received with suitable pomp.

Although I hastened to rid them of all illusions regarding the character of my visit, the Sultan gave me a very friendly reception. He was advanced in years, of tired appearance, and was clad in a rather un-regal robe, while his head shone from the fat which had been rubbed into it. I was summoned to occupy the place of honour at his side; and he showed himself to be an enlightened ruler. Unlike the others in their hostility to foreigners, when I questioned him he immediately gave his permission for me to photograph and make notes as much as I liked: indeed, he actually encouraged me.

Every one of the Sultan's thirty soldiers was present at the reception. The room in which it was held was small in compass, and every scrap of space was occupied by a crouching, perspiring, and to be quite candid, malodorous figure. True to custom we continued to squat for several hours, permitting from time to time dignified intervals to break the conversation. During one of the intervals the guests were offered some refreshing, though sour milk and bread, while the retinue produced their own provisions and started to picnic, as it were.

Finally, though, the strain of entertaining began to make itself felt with my hosts. The Sultan edged closer to me, bedded his generously-oiled head in my lap, and went to sleep. The soldiers followed their master's example, that is they went to sleep, and soon there was a fine chorus of deep breathing from the close mass of brown bodies, whose uniform colour was somewhat relieved by such bright-hued articles of raiment as they possessed.

After this communal siesta I decided to take a look at the ruins which remained from a time long since forgotten. I stood for some time facing the hill underneath which the ruins of a proud and splendid city lay buried, and I thought of the many secrets which were hidden under the sand, and wondered if the day would come when they would be brought to light. The friendly sultan had provided me with a guide to point out the places of greatest interest and the best subjects for my camera. Generally, though, all that could be seen above the sand were the main walls of the buildings. But from the massiveness of these walls, something of whose interior was still visible, it was plain to see that an imposing and populous city had once existed on the site. It was curious to reflect that a land which nowadays was only capable of providing a few people with the bare necessities of life had in times gone past, as the evidence clearly proved, been a thickly populated part. Moreover, its former inhabitants had lived in plenty amidst a luxurious nature, to become the creators of a fine and remarkable culture.

Ambarak called me punctually at sunrise on the following morning. The camels were quickly loaded, and we set out to rejoin the caravan. Ambarak, everything having passed off well, and knowing that it would not be long before he was back home, was in high spirits. The Sultan had lent me one of his soldiers, a Mass'aben Bedouin, to escort me as far as the Yemen frontier. His duties, I guessed, were more in the nature of a guard of honour than that of lifeguard.

At first our way led over a series of sand dunes. We

then arrived close to a long ridge of hills which jutted for several miles out into the desert. It was here that I noticed a strange thing. The loose sand never quite reached as far as the steep sides of the hills, but formed a sharp-sided dune some distance away from the rock; there remained a narrow ravine-like ditch between the dune and the cliffs. We rode most of the way through these small ravines, although in so doing we must have gone considerably out of our way. On the other hand we were saved the tiring climb over another series of dunes.

On the far side of the ridge there was a certain amount of vegetation and an occasional, stately tree. We found the caravan encamped in the shade of some of these trees. My companions had hung their rifles on the branches, although we were honoured by the visit of two strange, heavily-armed Bedouins. From their hoods and other characteristics I assumed that they came from Northern Arabia. Perhaps they were outlaws. As soon as they caught sight of me they stuck to me like leeches. Apparently the contents of my bags particularly interested them, and they took article after article in their hands, and examined everything with close attention. Nevertheless, they returned everything to its rightful place.

Late in the afternoon of the next day we arrived at a pass which is formed by the junction of two ranges of hills. On the summit are two parallel walls formed by huge stones, many of which are covered with ancient inscriptions, and both walls rise to a height of nearly one thousand feet. At first sight it appeared that an attempt had been made to fortify the pass, but on closer inspection it seemed more likely that it had served as a sort of



reservoir from which water had been conveyed to the neighbouring valleys.

The pass to-day marks the frontier. As I stood on its summit I could see the land of Yemen spread out before me, the land which had cost me so much effort to reach, my goal, the "Happy Arabia" of story and legend.

## VI.

### Entry into the Forbidden Land

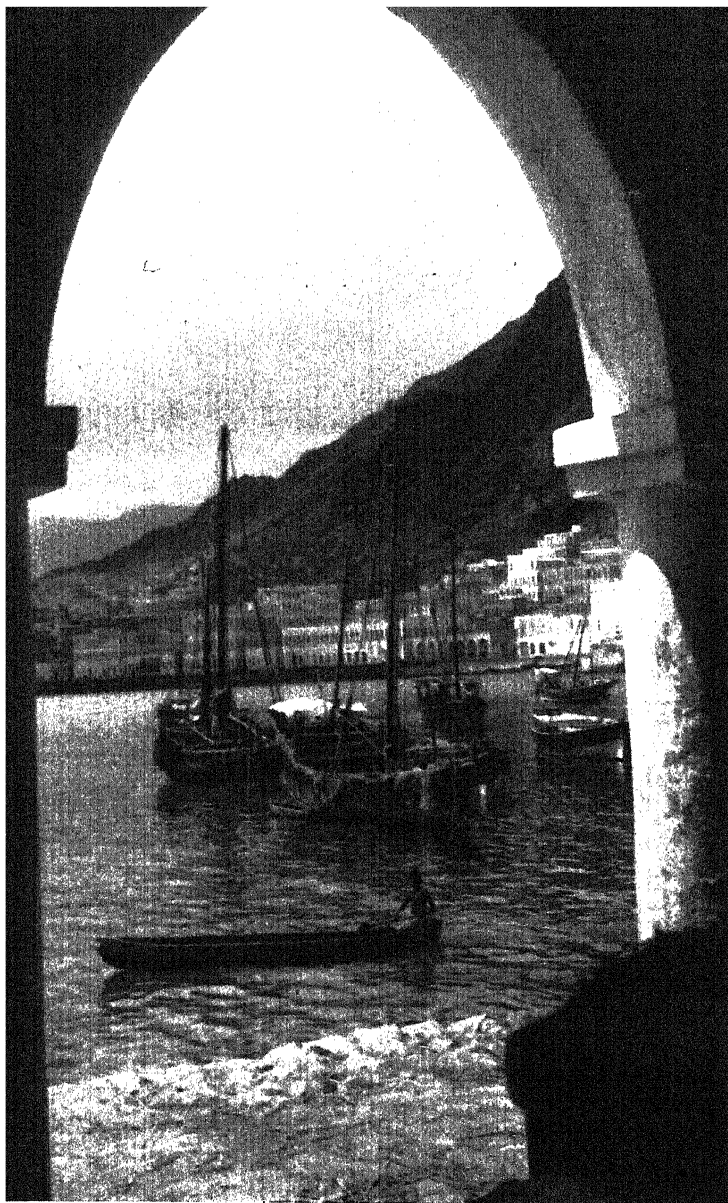
I LIGHT-HEARTEDLY descended the pass road, to find myself on territory belonging to the Kingdom of Yemen. The long, fatiguing journey across the desert lay behind me. The undertaking had proved successful; and I had entered the forbidden land, even if my entry had been through the backdoor, as it were.

Shortly before sunset we reached the native village of the Beni Agil tribe, to which my companions belonged, which lies about two hours' journey from Harib, the first place of importance inside Yemen territory. Women and children joyfully greeted the return of the travellers, and Ambarak took me to his hut, which consisted of a single room where I spent the night in company with the rest of the family. It had been arranged that after a well-earned day of rest Ambarak was to accompany me *via* Marib direct to San'a. But we had reckoned without forthcoming events.

On the following morning, as I was planning to spend an enjoyable day of rest and peace in the family circle of my guide Ambarak, there appeared the village Sheikh, who was tribal chief and mayor at the same time, accompanied by one of the King's soldiers. After an exchange



*A Bedouin warrior of the Garui tribe in  
Harib.*



*Beautiful Makalla.*



(Above) Bodies and ropes strain to draw water from the well.

(Below) A Bedouin child in Yemen



*A Bedouin in Yemen.*



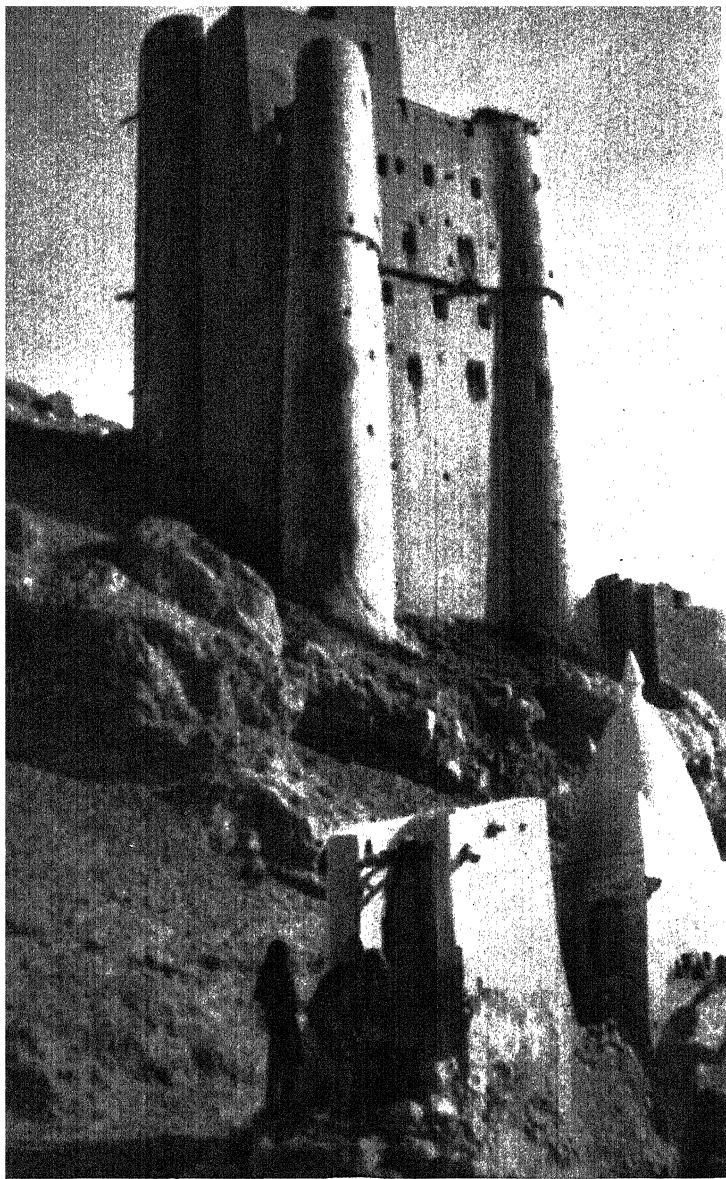
*An old Bedouin from Shibam.*

*Flashing eyes and smiling lips characterize many of the Saibani Bedouin girls. This one was photographed in Harib.*



*A Bedouin girl from Hadramaut.*





*Grim fortifications guard this town near the ancient site of Shibam.*



*A caravan on its hot, thirsty way in the trackless wastes of the Ruba al Khali.*

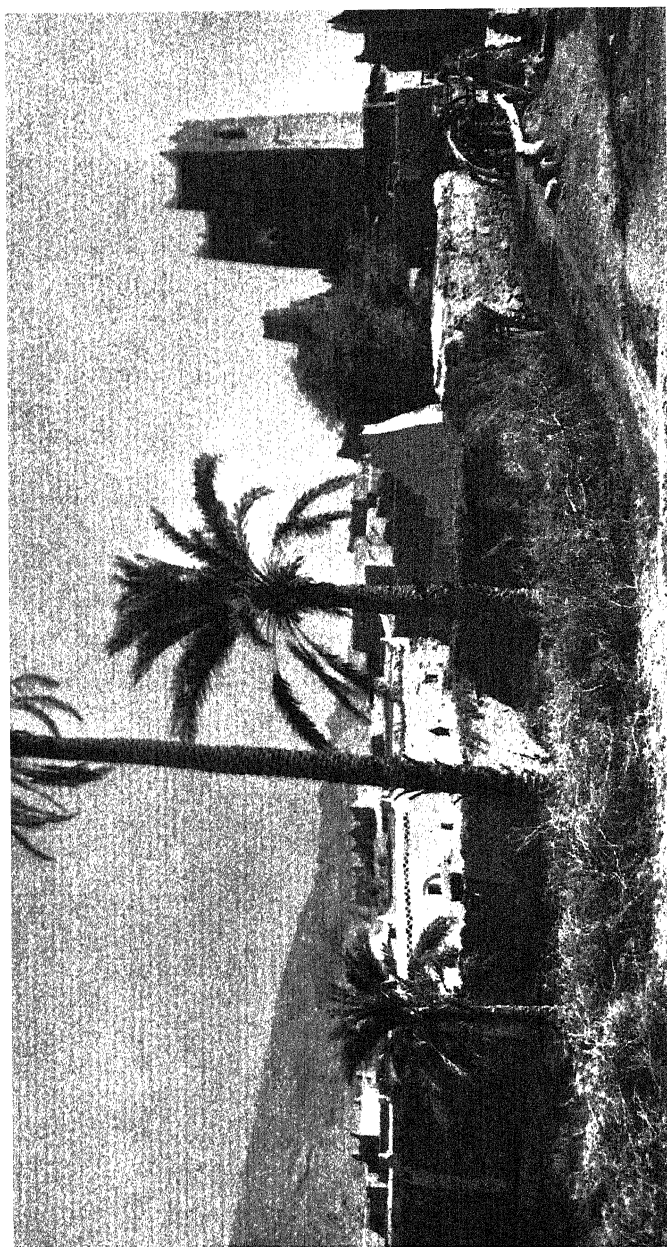




*Men chatter and bargain with the white stranger, while the women and children look on with silent, unquestioning interest at the strange machine with an eye.*

*The tent of a nomad in the desert is scarcely as substantial as an American Army pup tent. The Bedouin women live and sleep in front of it on the sand.*





*Traces of civilization cover the ever present sands of the desert at Harib, the border city of Yemen.*



*Where keen eyes sweep the horizon. A  
watch tower in Yemen.*

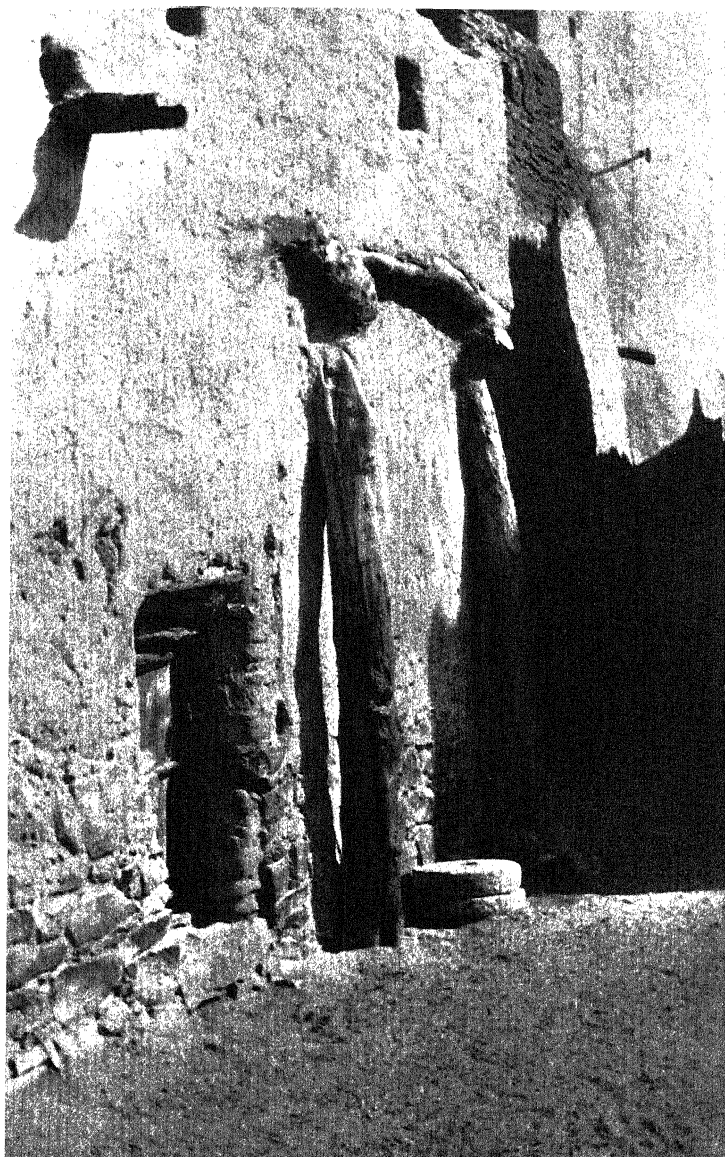


*A Bedouin girl at the well in Harib. Never wearing shoes, the feet of these people are almost as agile as their hands. Notice the almost prehensile quality of the toes.*



*Confusion, embarrassment, and pleasure struggle for expression in the face of this young Garui boy as he sits for his first picture.*





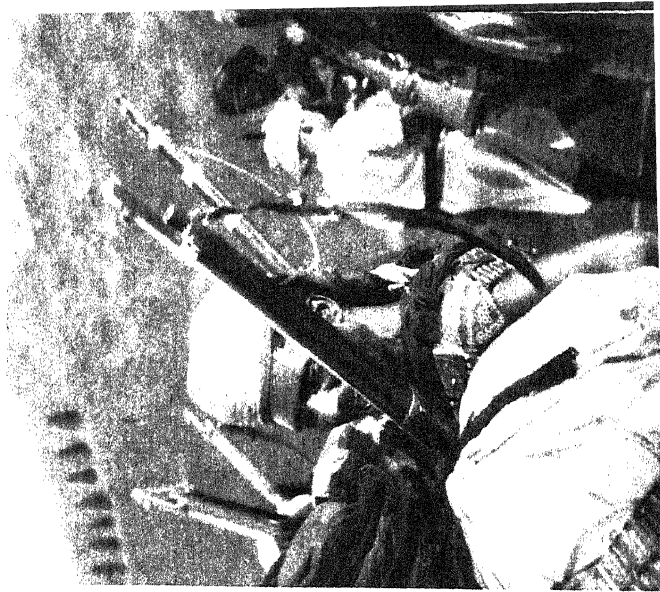
*Supporting posts and millstones lend an unintended decorative effect to the front of this house in Harib.*

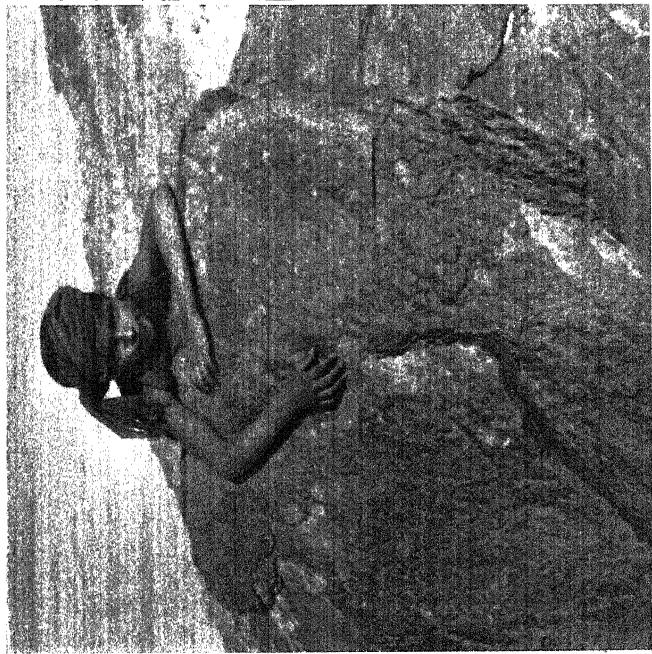


*Unaffected nobility and grace mark the natural poses of desert warriors as in this soldier of Yemen.*



*Wild songs of the desert are constantly on the lips of these Yemenite soldiers.*





*The rock to which he clings is no more naturally a part of the desert than this little Bedouin boy photographed near Harib.*



*A Yemenite weaver intent upon the intricacies of his tapestry.*

of friendly greetings the unexpected visitor seated himself and began the usual opening conversation. At first I was rather worried over the presence of the soldier, but the conversation continued, and nothing unusual seemed about to happen.

After some space the village Sheikh gave signs of intended departure; or, at all events, there was a long pause, after which I expected that he would get up and go. Instead of that, he turned to me and stated that he had orders to take me to the *Amel*, the head man of Harib. When I asked for the reason, he could not tell me; the only positive information I received was that he had been made personally responsible for taking me to Harib. That meant that I might just as well consider myself under arrest. The thing which surprised me most was that the man of Harib had already heard of my arrival, despite the fact that Harib was two hours distant and that I had only arrived late on the previous evening. Actually, though, it is a well-known fact that in this country there is a mysterious form of news service which is transmitted in some strange way and which is nearly as quick as, with us, the telephone or the wireless.

My camel was again made ready, the Sheikh and his escort mounted mules, and we started off. On the way we met soldiers, and more soldiers. The district seemed to be one huge camp. There was a good reason for this. The country centred about Harib had only recently, and at great difficulty, been annexed by the King of Yemen, whose territorial aspirations had steadily risen. During the conquest a stout resistance had been maintained by the local population, especially by the warlike tribes of Garui and Ben Abd. The purpose of a strong army of

occupation was to ensure against any revival of the Bedouin's inborn love of freedom. Peaceful conditions, however, had yet to be established. Several days before my arrival, so I learned, an attempt had been made on the life of the Amel, the Stadtholder of Harib, in the latter's office. A savage shooting affray ensued, in the course of which one soldier was killed and many others were wounded.

Our small cavalcade had gradually grown. Soldiers and local people, whom we met en route, joined the procession, and all eyes were strained in my direction. Perhaps such curiosity was excusable, for the people in this part had never before seen a white man. As we drew near to the tall watch towers of Harib, our following had assumed considerable proportions. When we arrived in the streets of the city itself the numbers grew even more, and we continued in a veritable triumphal procession, escorted by what looked to me like a battalion of soldiers and surrounded by civilians, to the *Hakuma*, the law courts, in which the Stadtholder's office was situated.

With the Sheikh on my right and soldiers on my left, I was led in to the official. First of all we entered a large, low hall which was in semi-darkness. Soldiers, evidently members of the Stadtholder's bodyguard, squatted on mats on the floor drinking coffee, smoking the water-pipe or chewing *kat*. (Reference will be made to "kat" later.)

Our way then led up a steep mud staircase formed of steps of irregular height. Above we found ourselves in an anteroom with a door, before which stood a small, heavily-armed man. The guardian of the door took charge of me and led me into the Stadtholder's office. On

two sides of this room there were windows with panes of real glass, a rare luxury for Arabia. The whole floor was covered with goats' hair carpets. At the far end were several cushions. The Amel sat on the center one, with an officer on his right and his secretary on the left. Each had before him a simple wooden box, to serve as a table for writing or eating, which was just high enough to be convenient for use in their low cushioned position.

The officer politely made room for me and offered me his own cushion as a seat. Next we all had coffee together, that is we drank a beverage prepared from the outer shell of the coffee bean, to which had been added a flavouring of ginger. In Southern Arabia, where the world's best coffee is grown ("Mocca," the name of its former, principal export harbour, suggests this), there is a custom, found nowhere else in the East of making their coffee, as I have just stated, not from the bean itself but from its shell. Whether it is an old custom, or whether the coffee bean as a profitable export commodity is regarded as too much of a luxury for home consumption, I was unable to discover. In any case it is rather strange, since in San'a, for example, there are plenty of people who could afford real coffee if they wanted it.

The Stadtholder showed great surprise at learning that I had succeeded in entering Yemen from the interior, by crossing the desert. It was a possibility that had never even occurred to his mind. He questioned me closely, and I had to tell him how it was managed. The thought "What queer people these Europeans are!" was clearly written in his expression. Incidentally, he had never set eyes on a white man until my arrival. As he still appeared to have doubts (at least so it seemed to me) about grant-

ing me permission to continue my journey I showed him my passport, which had been stamped on my arrival at Hodeida in the previous year, from which he might gather that this was not the first time that I had been in Yemen.

"That's quite in order," said the Amel, whose name was Kochlani, "you can continue your journey to San'a to-morrow."

Relieved to hear this expression of approval, I searched for a suitable expression of gratitude, so that I might take my leave and remove myself from the reach of the authorities as speedily as possible.

But before I could speak Amel Kochlani went on: "But I must ask you to show me the Imâm's letter which permits you to travel in Yemen."

In an eloquent speech I tried to persuade him that I had no need for any such letter. The Imâm knew me well, and, besides that, I had plenty of friends in San'a. "They'll be awfully glad to see me again," I concluded.

"Well, we'll see." That was the end of my audience. Two soldiers escorted me—to prison.

The cell designed for my occupation was a fairly large apartment with six windows, or more accurately, holes which were equipped with wooden shutters instead of glass. Apparently they knew something about European standards, for as I arrived in the doorway I was met with clouds of dust. Two menials were active in cleaning out the room, which means that they simply pushed out the filth, an operation in which they only partly succeeded. When they had swept out, several badly-worn carpets were spread on the floor, and a few rather soiled cush-

ions were thrown into one of the corners. My luggage was fetched, and then I was left to my own devices.

Not that I was without society, for a soldier camped with me day and night and never left my side save for very short intervals; and at such times he never omitted to lock the door from the outside. And I, for my part, was not permitted to venture even the shortest distance without his escort. He was an old soldier, getting on in years, and in addition to the Yemen forces he had served with the Italian and British armies. In that way he had been in relatively close touch with the western world, and it was probably owing to that reason that he had been selected to attend me.

I had no means of telling what the authorities intended to do with me. On the first day of my arrest I was visited by an officer, whose job it was to supervise the prison warders. He turned out to be a pleasant, obliging fellow; and when I asked him about the nature of my detention, and how long I was to be held in prison, he assured me with Oriental exuberance that it would only be a matter of two days at the most, then there was not the slightest doubt that they would allow me to continue the interrupted journey.

Well, if that was the case I had no special objection to the enforced rest, for after the exhausting journey which I had behind me a few nights' sound sleep would have been welcome indeed. But that was not to be. As soon as darkness approached, my fellow-lodger promptly closed and barred all the windows, and they remained shut until morning. It so happened that at the time—it was in June—it was frightfully hot in Harib, and whereas

the daytime heat was allowed to collect in the room, the night air was not allowed in to cool the atmosphere.

It was quite impossible to settle down and rest in that greenhouse temperature, quite apart from the small game which had discovered that the room afforded them pleasant quarters. The soldier stated that he had strict orders to keep the windows closed at night. When I plied him with further questions I learnt that it was feared that I might try to escape (the window openings were just large enough to allow a medium-sized dog to scramble through with difficulty) and, also, that the Bedouins might creep up to the building under cover of darkness and fire their rifles through the windows into the room. That appeared to be their favourite sport of the moment and a way of showing their displeasure at the military occupation of their country.

As a result of my complaints I was allowed to sleep on the tower of the Hakuma, the law building. There, at all events, I was well guarded, for some thirty soldiers assembled on the rather small platform of the tower, and I had to erect my bed in their midst. My nocturnal companions squatted on their blankets, chatted to each other or ate from the food which they had brought with them; and when they grew tired of that, they stretched out at full length and slept for a while. In these parts the people have no fixed times for work, rest, eating, sleeping, etc. When the opportunity occurs, they relax completely; when necessity demands, they are fully awake. Otherwise day and night pass in the same, monotonous manner.

At the foot of the tower numerous semi-wild dogs used to collect and fight over the scraps of food which



the soldiers threw down to them. The night concert of howls and growls continued without a break, until, eventually, the pack would scream away on the line of some stray jackal which had ventured into the city in search of food.

A sentry squatted on the highest point of the tower. Once every five minutes he gave vent to an ear-splitting wild-animal cry. The nearest sentry took up the cry, which was passed from sentry to sentry on the towers all over the city. Sometimes they all shouted in chorus, and their united effort was a deafening roar. This was the sentry's way of proclaiming that he had not fallen asleep at his post. If one of them did happen to fall asleep it was not for long!

In order to introduce an element of variety into this monotonous concert of animal and human voices, drummers and trumpeters paraded at certain hours. After the drummers had drummed for a solid half-hour, the trumpeters took over, playing a high wailing melody.

This martial music served to some extent to pacify the inhabitants of the city and neighbourhood, and its purpose was to show them that they were living under the watchful care of the King's soldiers, and that they might sleep undisturbed. It was left to the individual to place his own interpretation on the expression "undisturbed." Anyhow, after one sample of a night on the roof, I decided to choose the lesser evil and to sleep in future in my cell.

On the third day I was visited by the friendly officer with the henna-tinted beard. He wore a worried expression and told me that for the present there was no possibility of my being allowed to continue. First of all my

passport had to be sent to San'a, then the King would decide what was to be done with me. The people here, he told me, would be risking their necks if they allowed me to proceed without the express permission of the King.

So my imprisonment might continue indefinitely, for weeks might pass before the messenger returned from San'a. At the same time my guards treated me with consideration, and even in matter of meals seemed anxious to show me that they understood something of the methods employed in European kitchens. For lunch I was given chicken and rice; for dinner rice and chicken. This diet was continued day after day without change. For a long time after that I could not bear to gaze upon a chicken, not even from the distance.

The law building, in which I was to spend the following weeks, was at the same time prison, hospital and, strangely enough, the rendezvous and amusement-centre of the officers of the garrison. When a soldier reported sick they put him in prison, and there he stayed until he recovered or failed to recover his health. The favourite place of assembly for prisoners and patients was the big rectangular courtyard, in which they spent most of the day. In the afternoon the officers put in an appearance and mingled with those of lower rank.

At about five o'clock the courtyard was packed, for that was *kat* time, which locally is an occasion as solemn and as indispensable as the afternoon tea ceremony in England. To the Southern Arabian *kat* is as important as the Koran. It is a poisonous drug, but he calls it an essential stimulant. Kat-chewing is practised by everyone. Men, women and children are kat-addicts almost

without exception. It is a habit possessed by king or sultan down to the poorest beggar who can afford a few coins to buy this priceless stuff. It is said that the Yemenite can, in case of need, do without food for several days, but that it is impossible for him to exist a single day without kat.

The kat plant (*Catha edulis*) is a small, non-flowering shrub with soft, light-green leaves. It grows in the mountainous parts of upper Yemen, and is cultivated on as large a scale as coffee, though kat is not destined for export, but for home consumption. The soft leaves are carefully plucked, placed in bundles, and tightly bound in banana leaves or straw, to keep them fresh. In this form they find their way to the markets. Naturally, like the various grades of wines, the plant varies in quality and worth. The finest sort, the Bukhari-kat, is grown in a part of the country from which it takes its name, and it is only available to the very wealthy.

At kat time friends arrive at the house. A number of wrapped bundles are brought in by the slave and placed at his master's feet. The owner of the house unties the bundles and, having satisfied himself as to their quality and condition, distributes them among his guests. Instead of handing them to each person, the master of the house, following an ancient custom, throws the portions, which vary in size in accordance with the host's own estimate of the rank and importance of his guests. In Yemen, they say of a man who is very poor: "He has never thrown a bundle of kat to anyone."

The distribution ceremony over, kat eating begins. The leaves are removed from the stem, placed in the mouth, and chewed. This occupies a considerable time,

while all sit round with busy jaws working within bulging cheeks. When the leaf has been well-chewed the green juice is swallowed, anything of a non-edible nature is ejected, and the juice is "chased" by a little water or coffee. The guest then says "God be thanked!" as the custom requires, and starts on the second portion. In superior households brass spittoons are provided. It is even said that a certain sultan employs a vessel of pure gold for the purpose.

A Yemen philosopher wrote of kat: "It is a gift from Allah. We chew it and regain our strength. And it brings us a little 'khaf' (which means roughly "mental rest"). It does not produce the same effect as wine, but it brings rest to the body and ease to the mind, which can not be achieved in any other way, save, of course, through religion. When you feel as lifeless as a thirsty plant, take a little kat, and all your freshness and energy will come back. No, it does not encourage eroticism—on the contrary. The man who is far from his wife takes kat, in order to help him remain faithful to her."

Without doubt kat has both a stimulating and a narcotic effect, as if it contained caffeine and morphia. Unlike alcohol it does not produce intoxication, nor does it have the heavy narcotic effect of opium or hashish. It stimulates alertness of mind and physical energy. Yemenites declare that without kat it would be impossible for them satisfactorily to go about their business; even the schoolchildren feel unequal to the task of tackling their lessons until they have had their share of the magic weed.

A legend credits a goat with the discovery of kat. A goatherd happened to notice that one of his charges frequently, and for no obvious reason, developed into a

state of ecstasy which caused him to dance about and "jump over nothing." The man decided to look into the matter, and discovered that the goat behaved in this strange manner whenever it made a hearty meal off the leaves of a certain plant. He tried them himself, with the result that it was the goat's turn to smile.

He hurried into the neighbouring town, and the first person he met was a literary gentleman, to whom he reported his find. The latter went back with the goat-herd, sampled the plant, and confirmed that the claims made for it had been in no way exaggerated. With praiseworthy unselfishness, he decided not to keep his knowledge to himself (which showed him to be a true writer). He took a bundle of the leaves back to the town with him, and he wrote some very fine verses about "emerald leaves" and "the delicious weed." And so the kat habit began in Yemen, in all probability, rather more than four hundred years ago. But it never passed beyond the Yemen frontier; it is unknown even in neighbouring Hadramaut.

There can be no doubt, though, that in the long run it is an injurious habit. It gradually impairs physical efficiency, and the man who has long been addicted to the drug is easily to be recognized by the inanity of his expression and by his protruding eyes. The body, too, loses its power to resist the attacks of tropical diseases, such as typhus and dysentery.

If the people of Yemen appear degenerated and weakly, it may be attributed to this widespread evil. Therefore, it is no matter of surprise that the Yemen soldiers, all of whom are kat addicts, were no match for the powerful warriors of the great King Ibn Saud.

During my imprisonment I was not unoccupied. I had with me a number of medicines with which I was able to help one or two sufferers. The tidings soon spread, and when I opened my door in the morning there would be a queue of patients waiting in the corridor. Soon there were regular "consulting hours," which often lasted until mid-day. The people were absolute strangers to medical aid, and they gladly accepted the treatment which I was able to give them.

Eye-disease, in most cases severe inflammation of *conjunctiva tunica*, was very widespread. Frequently the eyes were so swollen that their owners could scarcely see out of them. This condition I was often able to relieve with atropin. The frequency of sandstorms is the reason for this particular disease. Regularly at twelve o'clock every day the sky darkened. Then, borne by a burning wind, came great clouds of dust blown from the desert, the Ruba al Khali. In a few seconds the town seemed enveloped in a huge brown mantle, and daylight disappeared. It was impossible to protect oneself from the minute particles of sand. They found their way through cracks and through the hastily-closed windows; covered everything with a fine coating of dust; got into one's mouth, nose and eyes. This, the worst time of the day, lasted from one to two hours.

To have the desert for a neighbour has its disadvantages. The desert is never at rest; its masses of sand are always on the move; its main purpose seems to be to destroy the work of man's hand. To protect plantations and buildings against this tenacious, never-tiring foe demands industry and patience which are seldom attributed in the public mind to the inhabitants of tropical countries.

Even worse than the eye complaints are the many open sores on legs and feet, from which the soldiers, in particular, are great sufferers. As they always go bare-footed they are very prone to minor injuries which so easily turn septic. The moment they cut themselves they wrap an old rag round the wound, and no attempt is made to cleanse it of filth and dust. When the wound gets bigger they simply do not bother to bandage it at all, having decided that there is no further use in nursing it. They seem to be practically insensible to pain. I remember especially the case of a soldier who was a victim of leprosy, and he had two great open sores on his legs. I washed his wounds daily and renewed the dressings. That must have been exceedingly painful, but the patient seemed almost too bored to notice that I was treating him; and as he went away he was busily occupied in ridding his clothes of lice.

So I gradually made the acquaintance of my fellow-prisoners, hospital patients and gaolbirds. Indeed, everybody seemed to sympathize with my plight, and often a soldier would climb up to the tower to see if there were any signs of the messenger from San'a. But it was some while before he arrived.

I got to know practically the whole of the Harib garrison, for almost every soldier spent a certain amount of his time under arrest. Punishment of this nature was by no means considered degrading; on the contrary it was frequently looked upon as a clever way of evading duty for a few days or weeks, and a means of assuring a thorough rest. Every kind of crime was punished with imprisonment, whether the culprit had flatly refused to carry out his orders, or whether he had approached too

close to one of the local beauties. Each new arrival was chained by the feet and then left to himself. Generally he chose a shady corner and settled himself comfortably to sleep, until that pleasant hour of the afternoon arrived when everybody assembled in the courtyard; then the officers joined the throng; the day's events were discussed; the soldiers, despite their handicap of the chains, executed old Arabian dances; and then came the kat-eating ceremony. When the time came for the prisoner's discharge his chains were pried open with a wooden lever, an operation which, presumably, must have been rather uncomfortable.

It was curious to watch the method employed with a prisoner who had been brought in accused of theft. Use was made of a small, polished semi-precious stone, an *Agig*, which was said to possess magic powers. Nearly everyone here carried one of these stones as a charm, either in a leather bag or suspended round the neck. The accused had to hold his hand, palm downwards, firmly on the stone; if, when the hand was drawn away, the stone was found adhering to it, then the man was pronounced guilty; in the other case he was acquitted. This *Agig* when used as a charm was considered an excellent protection against the many scorpions which were found locally. I myself have seen people handle with impunity even the biggest, the highly dangerous, black scorpions, whose sting in certain circumstances may prove fatal.

When I had been confined in prison a week I was granted permission to take walks in the city, though always in the company of three heavily-armed soldiers. Three men were sent with me, not so much because they



thought it needed that many to prevent my escape as to guard against attacks by members of the civil population.

The relations between soldiers and civilians were anything but cordial. The recent subjugation of their land had rendered its inhabitants exceedingly bitter. The proud Bedouins, who hitherto had been more or less their own masters, had they met one of the King's soldiers out alone, or unarmed, would have wasted little time in dispatching him to the next world.

The big garrison which had to be maintained in Harib constituted a heavy burden to the inhabitants of that city. The soldiers were supplied only with flour for bread-making and a few farthings a day, with which they had to buy all their other requirements. The money, of course, principally went to purchase that most important of all necessities, *kat*. Anything else that was needed—and the sum total was a substantial one—was simply requisitioned from the not over-rich citizens. That, of course, did not serve to endear the King of Yemen to his new subjects.

During my walks I extended the tours (against permission, admittedly) to include the environs of the city, where I came across many traces of ancient Sheban culture. The astonishing number of the cities and their size evidenced that at one time they were populated by a wealthy and artistic people.

This may not be said of the present inhabitants of this remote and little-known district. The neighbourhood of Harib, a wide, semi-fertile valley enclosed on both sides by the desert, with its many old ruins buried in the sand, is principally peopled by the members of two clans, the Beni Garui and the Beni Abd.

The Garui are very dark, having blue-black skins. (Of this bluish tint present mention will be made.) Their black, curly hair is dressed in a peculiar manner, no doubt traditional, found nowhere else in Arabia. The head is shaved, leaving three small tufts, one on the forehead, one at the back and one in the middle of the head.

The Beni Abd are less dusky and have smooth hair. They belong to a type very uncommon in Arabia. Knowing nothing about them, one would guess them to be Indians. Both tribes attach great importance to racial purity, and there is no intermarriage. There is a nobility in their movements and bearing which is noticeable even in the children. They possess an easy dignity and a proud air which give them a singular attraction; and even though they depart in many ways from our own customs—for instance, they eat rice with their fingers—they do not lose that attraction.

The women are not so strictly confined as they are in most Mohammedan countries. In local houses I often saw the family members of both sexes seated together, which would be impossible in other parts of Arabia. I established myself in their confidence through my medicines, which the women also appreciated. They wear long blue-black robes and a head-cloth of the same colour, which is tied with a red and silver band. Silver plays a very important role in their ornamentation; necklaces, heavy bracelets on the arms and ankles, and rings on fingers and toes are all of silver.

Neither the Garui nor the Abd ever leave, nor wish to leave, the boundaries of their own territory. They appear to regard communication with the outer world as beneath their dignity, and they leave travel to my old

companions of the desert, the Beni Agil. Both tribes are clever at weaving carpets. Their carpets, woven principally from goats' hair and sheep's wool, are generally black or black and red, and they are famed throughout Southern Arabia. The Agil take them to the markets which lie beyond Harib.

The Garui also populate the two-hour distant Marib, the former Sheba, the capital of the great Kingdom of Sheba. Whether they themselves are descendants of the ancient Shebans is a matter of guesswork. But since they are so distinct from any other Arab type, and have apparently stood aloof for centuries, there may be something in the thought.

In addition to carpet-weaving, Harib is the chief centre in Southern Arabia for the preparation of indigo, which is a particularly difficult and tiresome process. The indigo is secured from the seeds of the small green indigo plant. Outside the city are several well-trodden squares in which the seeds gathered during the day are deposited. Early on the following morning, almost before the sun has risen, the work of preparation begins. The seeds are beaten with wooden staves until they have been broken up into parts small enough to pass through a special sieve. After this process the seed is put into large open vessels filled with water. Air and water combine to turn the mass into a dark blue solution. Fermentation lasts until noon, when the sun has reached its peak, and then the solution is stirred with a wooden ladle, while the workers maintain a rhythmic sing-song.

The dye is used to colour the cotton cloth which is then made into clothes. Indigo, though, not only dyes

the people's clothes, but it gradually dyes their skins, too. However, instead of finding this objectionable, they seem to like it, and actually rub the dye into their skins, until they attain that magnificent blue-black hue which tempts one to call them the "Blue Arabs."

## VII.

### On the Roof of Arabia

ONE morning, when I arrived in the courtyard—by that time I had been in prison for three weeks—I was quickly surrounded by prisoners and patients, who hastened to tell me that the messenger from San'a had returned on the previous evening and was said to have brought favourable news with him.

Towards mid-day, the Stadtholder, Said Kochlani, appeared in person and expressed his pleasure at being able to inform me that official permission had been obtained from the King for me to proceed to San'a. He was not at once prepared to say in what manner I was to journey.

Later I heard that the King had specified in detail the route which I was to use, and had given orders for an escort of three men to go with me. So my freedom still seemed a rather distant goal.

The shortest and most frequently used road to San'a takes one through Juba, which is about a two days' journey from Harib. But the King had just dispatched large formations of troops to Juba, there to take the field against some insubordinate Bedouin tribe. No foreigner might be allowed to gaze upon such military un-

dertakings, and so a short, convenient journey was denied me.

A second way leads through Marib, the original Sheba. That was the way I should have liked to go, and it was the way which, according to my original plan, I had intended to take. But a no less serious obstacle stood in that path. The King has the utmost dislike for foreign exploration of his realm; and a would-be explorer in search of antique ruins is given no preference. His interest in ruins half buried in the sand, and in illegible inscriptions, is regarded as a pretext for spying out the land, and he would have the greatest difficulty in making anyone believe that his photographs only concerned themselves with a forgotten past. The King seems to fear that, if he opened his frontiers, he would be admitting all sorts of undesirable elements masquerading under the cloak of exploration; Yemen would soon become the goal of those who hoped to "open up" the country to "modern civilisation"; and a foreign power would follow hard on the heels of the foreign engineer and foreign financiers with plans to industrialize the country. And no one, knowing what has happened in other exotic lands, can deny that there is plenty of justification for this attitude.

Be that as it may: here, at all events, are to be found the most interesting and important of the ancient Sheban remains, which (in Marib and other centers) are beyond the reach not only of the foreigner but of any Mohammedan who is not a Yemen citizen.

I was fully aware of the King's views, and knew that it would be extremely hazardous for me to attempt to force my way into Sheban territory from a quarter

where the King would be least expecting intruders—that is from the desert side.

The simplest and most obvious thing for the King to have done would have been to deposit me, gently and firmly, over the boundary of the forbidden land, leaving me to go back the way I had come. But he knew his European. For had I been turned out in that manner, there is no doubt that I would have attempted to enter Yemen again at some other point. In order to prevent that the King took care to have me brought under guard, first of all to San'a.

The way which I was to take possessed one advantage: it took me through an unknown part of Yemen, though it was also regarded as a tiring and perilous route. That was what I was told by the officers who were present for kat at the usual hour, when the important events of the day were eagerly debated. On this occasion the first topic was my coming departure. They took the kindest possible interest in my comfort and were unanimous in deciding that I needed a mule, which was a much more comfortable mount than a camel; and they announced their intention of procuring one for me.

However, on the next morning, when it was time to start, fine promises had apparently been forgotten; not a mule was within sight or earshot. I had no alternative, therefore, to taking my aged, wooden-paced camel, on which I was mounted (true to habit) in the center of my hundred and one belongings. Two of the soldiers who were to escort me (the third man was missing) took long and ceremonious leave of their comrades, whose hands they kissed. To them it seemed that they were saying their last farewells, for the journey, they

said, passed through a district so unsafe that it was extremely doubtful that we should reach our destination.

After we had gone about half an hour the third soldier of my guard caught up with us; and I was a little surprised to see him riding a mule, whose excellent saddlery particularly struck my notice. Eventually it transpired that one of the older officers, taking compassion on me, had sent this good saddle animal for my use. But the soldier decided that I was comfortable enough where I was, and he kept the mule for his own use, even refusing to allow his own foot-slogging comrades to change places with him for the shortest distance, though they were often so fatigued that they could scarcely walk. This worthy individual was rather large of girth for an Arab, and unlike most fat men was a surly bad-tempered fellow, whom even his own companions disliked.

When we had proceeded some way in company with our new, and not altogether welcome, addition to the party, we suddenly heard loud shouts behind us, apparently from an exceedingly angry person. Presently there emerged from the midst of a large cloud of dust one of the officers of the Harib garrison, a Turk who had taken service with the Yemen army, who, before we had a chance to guess at the cause, let out a torrent of frightful abuse. Eventually we gathered that the soldier who had recently joined us had ridden off the mule in this particular officer's best saddle and bridle. The injured Turk gave full expression to his feelings, wished the sinner a highly unpleasant fate in this world and the next, and the three soldiers soon began to exhibit signs of extreme fear. But after he had recovered his property, the



officer rapidly calmed down and ended by withdrawing his threat to drag the miscreant off to prison in Harib. After that the soldiers could not praise the officer's magnanimity highly enough. Personally I was very sorry that he had not taken our disagreeable companion along with him.

My unwilling guide on this occasion was Sale, Ambarak's brother, the man with whom I made the original contract in Shibam. Sale had returned to Harib a fortnight after my own arrival. The Stadtholder had learnt something of what had gone before, and the worthy Sale was called to give an account of himself, but the man safely wriggled out of his predicament, and probably pleaded illness as the reason for his late return. On the day of my departure he was again summoned by the Stadtholder who ordered him to accompany me to San'a; and, having assumed the responsibility, he carried it out almost to the letter.

We reached Abu Teif, a Beni Agil village, about noon. On account of the heat we decided to rest during the remainder of the day and continue our journey in the night. Sale, whose native village it was, took me into his straw hut, and his wife and children cooked a meal for us. After we had finished eating we sat and talked.

"My brother Ambarak," Sale cautiously began, "is a good man, is he not? He brought you safe and sound to Harib?"

"That he did. I am not complaining about him."

"Then," and Sale's expression brightened, "then he'll take you to San'a all right."

And that settled that. Sale stayed at Abu Teif, freed of responsibility, and his brother again stepped into his

shoes. The arrangement suited me excellently, for a better guide than Ambarak would be hard to find.

Night had fallen. Our caravan moved quietly through the darkness. Apart from an occasional jangling of weapon or bit there was utter silence. The clear, brightly starlit sky shed a soft light over the earth, casting no shadows. Round about us was the desert, before whose power man is impotent. It holds every fibre of his being in its grasp; and he is forced to love it, though its presence may bring about his own death. There is something unfathomable and deeply mysterious about the desert; it is at once beautiful and repellent; sublime yet treacherous; voluptuous though chaste; it is a demon and a goddess at the same time.

Our way was a long, monotonous ascent and descent of high dunes of loose sand. From afar our small caravan must have looked like a small ship rolling on the high waves. Continuing in this way, uphill and downhill, it was totally unapparent that we were steadily gaining altitude and that we were approaching closer to the high mountains of inner Yemen.

Suddenly our guide came to a halt and made a sign. We stood fast; no man stirred. A short distance ahead a small fire was visible. It meant that men were at hand, and in this region that proclaimed danger. Our guide cautiously went ahead, calling into the night. There was nothing to be seen, but we could hear voices answer him; they were the other's sentries, who were behind the cover of a small dune. Each side mentioned the name of his tribe; and I was reminded of ships displaying their flags as they meet on the high seas. Our guide beckoned

us on, and we soon reached the encampment of a caravan. The Bedouins belonged to a friendly clan. We stayed with them and rested for two hours, and then set off again into the night.

On the third day of our desert journey, when the peaks of the Yemen highlands stood silhouetted against the horizon, we met with nomadic Bedouins with their characteristic tents of black goats' hair. They were the first genuine nomads that I had met in Southern Arabia.

Curiously enough, the Bedouin tent, a typical characteristic of Arabia, is almost unknown in the southernmost part of the peninsula. There even the poorest people live in permanent houses, or at least in huts. Nomadism, wandering from pasture to pasture as the seasons change, is a custom foreign to the Southern Arabians—a rather surprising fact in view of the nature of their country, with its deserts and steppes.

This contrast in mode of living appears to result more from tradition than from soil and climate—Southern Arabia, for example, unlike the center and northern parts of the country, produced a remarkably high standard of architecture—and one is led to conclude that racial differences are greater than one at first anticipated. On closer examination, the origin of the Arabs and their racial combinations are puzzling problems.

The present-day Arabians, at all events, comprise widely-differing elements, a fact which is evident without close observation. The dark, almost black tribes of Hadramaut, for instance, suggest an Indian origin. In the so-called Sāibani one might well suspect relationship to the Wedda, the original Indian population of Ceylon.

The tribes of Yemen, on the other hand, bear many of the characteristics of Central Asia. Here, one must bear in mind that in ancient times Arabia was one of the principal junctions of trade among the nations. Racial migration, similar to that which affected Europe in early times, no doubt accounted for this mixture of peoples.

The nomads whom we met close to the Yemen highlands were from Central Arabia, a fact which was betrayed in certain characteristics of their dress. By a curious coincidence they possessed the same tribal names as Bedouins settled in the far south, such as Beni Agil and Beni Abd. They received us amicably, but like all Arabs, with the exception of those who are in constant contact with western lands, they had a profound mistrust of the camera. Nevertheless, thanks to an old, well-tried trick, I managed to take their photograph.

Soon after our arrival an old Bedouin, recognizing me as a European, came up and urgently begged me for some *Daua* (medicine), as he was in pain. Before dismounting from my camel I asked the old man for a detailed description of his ailment, and a crowd of women and children pressed round to listen to the progress of the consultation. I then took my camera and placed my eye to the view-finder, as if it were an instrument through which I intended to subject the patient to a more thorough examination. Having made sure of my picture, I explained that I had satisfied myself as to the nature of the discomfort, and I gave the old man some pills. They were, of course, very harmless, but in such cases the treatment, owing to the faith which the patients place in it, seldom fails to achieve a betterment. In this case, though, both doctor and client were satisfied.

In gratitude I was handed a wooden vessel full of pure, fresh water—probably the finest and most valuable gift that it is possible to give anyone in the desert.

We had been journeying for many hours along a dry, stony river-bed, the Wadi Dhenne. We were climbing the whole time, and the cliffs and rocks to left and right of us grew loftier and more rugged. Soon we were enclosed in a veritable world of mountains.

Late in the afternoon we gained the highest point of our route, and the path which we then took led us into "Green Yemen." We were on the "roof of Arabia," that famous mountain district which lies at an average height of six thousand feet above sea level, and whose highest peaks extend to nine thousand and more feet in altitude. The sight which met our eyes was one which I shall never forget. There are few parts of the earth where such a striking contrast may be found. Coming from the desert, with its privations and its hardships, one seemed suddenly to be entering a different world. We greeted this sudden change of scenery and conditions with infinite satisfaction and delight.

We were in a mountainous country of extraordinary beauty. Summit was ranged against summit whose varied and fantastically-shaped forms were sharply silhouetted against the blue of the sky; the appearance was as if a turbulent sea had suddenly been turned to stone. And between these lofty, rugged and awe-inspiring mountains lay pleasant valleys, green and bright, with fields and flowers.

Before us stood a giant mountain with a number of small peaks clustered at its sides, which gave it the ap-

pearance of a tall-spired Gothic cathedral; and on its highest point we could distinctly see a village whose watch-tower stood out plainly against the soft blue background of the sky. As we continued, and came nearer to this nest in the mountains, we saw that almost every peak had its village perched high on the summit. The villages consisted of houses of three to five storeys, built very close together, which, from afar, looked like a single, stoutly-built citadel, with yawning precipices on all sides. They were reached by a single goat path, hard to find, which led to house-entrances on the hidden side. All the doors and windows of these houses looked towards the interior of the village; on the outside only bare walls were to be seen.

An old Arabian writer, in a celebrated description of his country, said of Yemen: "The inhabitants are notably strong and healthy. Illness there is unknown; poisonous reptiles and plants are rare; imbeciles or blind people are practically never seen. The climate is that of a paradise; the same clothing is worn summer and winter; the women never grow old."

Well, the sage may have exaggerated in many respects; and in any case I am unable to confirm that the women enjoy perpetual youth. However, there is little doubt that the inhabitants of this aloof, little-visited mountainous part are a much better type and stronger and healthier than, for example, the people living in the coastal districts.

What may nowadays be seen of favoured Yemen (it is the only part of the Near East which receives a regular and adequate rainfall) is admittedly but a shadow of its former glory. Innumerable peaks and promontories

still carry the scanty remains of ancient mansions and castles, but in the valleys one comes across the ruins of fabulously rich cities of the past.

Yemen with its neighbouring parts was the *ultima thule* of antiquity, the farthestmost reaches (and an imposing goal it was) of the world as far as it was then known. Beyond that—legends and fairy-tales of what lay to East and South were plentiful, and in support of them were the rich treasures of gold and precious stones which the Shebans brought back with them from legendary lands. After Babylonia Southern Arabia is our oldest and most important centre of culture, whose influence, as recent explorations lead one to assume, extended at least as far as Africa and Egypt and to the districts lying along the Mediterranean, and in consequence must have played a part in the foundation of Western civilisation.

Late in the evening we came to a fertile valley, enclosed by high mountains, with maize fields, orchards, vineyards and fig plantations. The first place of importance, Habab, contrasted sharply with the nest-like villages of the mountains, and its houses were strewn in small clusters, like the farms in many parts of Germany. At the same time watch-towers and embattlements gave the appearance of a fortress.

We stayed the night and half the next day in Habab. There I again had opportunity to notice how my companions, acting presumably on their orders, attempted to hinder me from establishing any sort of contact with the local inhabitants. We camped in the open, a little way outside the village. But that did not prevent men, women

and children, who had learnt of our arrival, from streaming out of the village on the following morning to gaze curiously at that rare sight, a European. In consequence, a spell would be cast over me, at least so my companions emphatically declared. And it was so.

Among the assembled natives was a woman—Fatum was her name—who appeared less shy of the white man than were the others. She was not remarkably young and beautiful, but she had a pleasant, open face. She was clad in a long black robe, wore a great array of silver ornaments, and had as a headdress a goatskin, which is the local dress. The impression she made was strange, but she was uncommonly confiding, asked me about all sorts of things, and ended by inviting me to take coffee with her in her house. My companions, who had watched me intently, unanimously pronounced against it, but I had grown exceedingly tired of their constant watch, and so I gladly accepted the invitation. We sat in a cosy little arbour in front of the house, where the whole family assembled, while we chatted and I was entertained. That, however, did not keep Fatum from attending to her duties as mother of the family, and during the time I was there she systematically and painstakingly searched her small daughter's hair, while the child's head lay in her lap, for anything in the nature of lodgers. And I spent a couple of very pleasant hours in the agreeable and hospitable company of this family of Biblical simplicity. When I returned from the visit my companions insisted that I would soon notice, as they had previously prophesied, that Fatum had cast a spell over me.

And, indeed, during our march that day I had nothing but bad luck. Soon after we had left we came to a



stretch of water, which had to be forded. When my camel, carrying me and the whole of my property, arrived in the middle, the wretched animal halted, went down, first on the forelegs and then on the hind legs, and calmly began to enjoy a cold bath. I, of course, was unloaded into the water, and with the whole of my baggage received a thorough ducking. The soldiers looked at me with compassion. "Fatum, Fatum!" they shouted. "We told you so!"

The next incident happened as we were passing through a dried river-bed. The Bedouin who was leading my camel suddenly released his hold of the animal to go over and greet some compatriots who were passing near us. My camel made straight for some thorny bushes, whose green leaves had attracted the hungry beast's attention. I had no means of controlling the camel, and as the animal pulled up short on reaching its destination, I shot off its back and described a high trajectory through the air, to land heavily in the middle of a bush. My shirt was torn to ribbons, and my body was painfully scratched.

The soldiers looked upon me with even greater compassion than before.

"Fatum, Fatum", they repeated. "The bad woman has bewitched you."

Mirwa, the next town we came to, is rich in remains of the Sheban era. For that very reason the soldiers maintained an extra strict watch over me as we passed through the place. Mirwa has a large Jewish colony, and several Jews came up to me and surreptitiously offered their services as guides. "Over there is a place with some

fine inscriptions. Go and look at them!" But, unfortunately, I was unable to escape the vigilance of my guards.

Not far from Mirwa we came within sight of the Jebel Nukum, a fantastically formed mountain peak which is the principal landmark near San'a, the capital of Yemen. To us, used as we were to rapid travel, accustomed to seeing the landscape constantly change, it was a strange experience—and a good test of patience—to have before one's eyes day after day a single mountain which hardly seemed to approach any nearer.

We began to notice, though, that we were gradually approaching a town of considerable size. The roads, such as they were, began to show more and more signs of life. We met merchants with their burdened donkeys and camels; Bedouins, Jews and wealthy city-dwellers passed us.

We spent the last night away from our destination at a big caravan camp, where several other caravans had already come to rest. Arriving in the dark, we had to thread our way through donkeys and camels, bundles of goods and sleeping Bedouins before we came to a vacant place on which to erect our own camp. At this altitude (six thousand feet) the nights are decidedly chilly, even in summer, and to sleep in the open, under the stars—unless one was uncommonly romantic-minded—was no joke. To add to my discomfort, certain disagreeable small animals seemed to guess that my own white skin afforded just the right kind of change from the lean, brown bodies which were their regular, daily nourishment. Anyhow, I had the impression that the entire colony of cockroaches and lice had made me their rendez-

vous for the night. But the loss of a night's sleep was soon forgotten, and the thought that I was drawing near to my destination, that I was within reach of the goal of my plan, superseded all others. Once in San'a all fatigue and exertion would be forgotten.

On the next morning, having altered our course, we reached a height where the Jebel Nukum, of whose sight we were rather tired, stepped, as it were, to one side, and we looked down upon the holy City of San'a—holy in that it possesses, for a population of some fifty thousand souls, forty-eight mosques, thirty-nine synagogues and, in addition, twelve public baths. Seen from afar the city looked like a wasp which had climbed down from the mountains. In the light of the burning sun the closely packed houses looked like a series of cliffs in terraces, with tall palaces and slender minarets standing out from among the rest. The whole city was bedded in a valley surrounded by high mountains of grotesque and fantastic form.

While we were descending in the direction of the city, and as the mighty city gate appeared in sight, my camel seemed to take heart from the knowledge that the fatiguing journey was drawing to a close, and in an unguarded moment started off at a brisk trot. The trot soon grew to a canter, and from a canter the pace developed into a wild gallop. I glued myself as tightly as I could to my saddle, while my baggage flew in all directions. I was preparing myself for a somewhat undignified entry into the city, when, as luck would have it, two Bedouins came along, courageously threw themselves at the head of the wildly-careering animal, and eventually succeeded in stopping it. And so I was en-

abled to collect myself, more or less, and to approach the city gate in more suitable style, in the centre of my military escort. I hoped—and my soldiers firmly believed—that a cordial welcome would be given us by the King, who had honoured me on my last journey to Yemen.

## VIII.

### A Prisoner of the King

JUST outside the city we passed extensive barracks, which, like most of the military buildings in the country, were built by the Turks. But despite all military action the Turks never quite succeeded in conquering the people of mountainous Yemen, whom one might almost call the Swiss of Arabia. We arrived before the biggest gate of walled-in San'a, the Bab el Yemen. I looked to my appearance, to make certain that my entry would take place in that dignity which the local inhabitants associated with a European. But the troops on guard refused our entry into the King's City by that gate: we were told to proceed to another gate, the Bab el Shaub. The object of this manoeuvre was not apparent; but at the same time it seemed that special instructions had been issued concerning my reception.

So we continued along by the city wall, which offered no shade, in the mid-day heat which rendered the atmosphere like that of a burning oven. I was admitted at the Bab el Shaub and was taken under an increased escort to the Imâm's palace. Would I be taken at once to see the King? That was what I hoped, for in that case I would have had an opportunity of recalling to his memory the

friendly reception that was accorded me on my last visit, and in that way perhaps have persuaded him to take a more lenient view of my unannounced entry into his country. But the hope was a slender one, since I knew that the King made a rule never to receive a stranger as soon as the stranger arrives.

After about half an hour of vain waiting I was again placed in the centre of soldiers, and without a word of explanation being given me, we marched on. Soon we came to the house of a certain Kadis Abdulla, the Governor of the City. Again I was forced to wait in the street under the scorching sun. Finally, when I asked to have my exhausted camel led into the shade of a house, I was brusquely ordered to stay where I was. The discourteous tone in which it was said—a tone seldom employed in this land, even by the representatives of authority—left me with evil forebodings.

Well, in brief, I was treated as one convicted of a serious crime, and without a word being spoken and with no reason given, I was locked up in prison, a place of residence to which I had grown quite accustomed. This time, though, the matter was not so simple. They took me through a long corridor which had low doors on both sides. A gaol-warder, whose appearance definitely failed to inspire confidence, opened one of the doors, and with a motion of the hand explained that it was the entrance to my cell. It was a small apartment with a very small window and it was literally full of filth and vermin. I categorically refused to enter such a pigsty. "All right, this one!" said the warder without emotion; and he opened the door of a second cell. And he opened yet more doors, but conditions everywhere were the

same. I openly revolted and sat down in the corridor in the middle of my baggage, refused to budge, and declined to listen to explanations and persuasions.

My attitude caused them no little embarrassment. What were they to do with me? It was more than they dared, to force me into one of the cells. For, after all, they still retained some of the respect for Europeans which had existed in former days. After some hesitation the warder seemed to have hit upon a bright idea. He disappeared, while two of the soldiers who had escorted me from Harib (the third man, the man with the mule, made off shortly before we reached San'a) stayed behind to guard me. Very soon the warder returned bringing with him the chief constable of the City, one El Hannish (which means the "Snake", though otherwise there was nothing reptilian about him). Despite his profession he was a pleasant, friendly man; and when I explained to him the reason for my revolt he solved the problem, simply and sympathetically, by placing his own office at my disposal.

"You'll be all right there", the soldiers commented, as they picked up my belongings.

It was certainly a better arrangement from my point of view, even if the office accommodation of local police stations hardly bears comparison with that to which we are used in our own country. The furniture consisted of a decrepit writing-desk and a bench which went with it, a rickety cane chair, an armchair of sorts with its upholstery in tatters, a small table and last of all a cupboard. I assumed that the cupboard contained important documents; but, on looking again, I discovered that the whole of the police files, in the form of small

rolls of parchment, were lying scattered underneath the case, and that they had been substantially chewed by mice who evidently had small respect for legal authority.

The system had one advantage, for in that way the documents did not accumulate to the extent of becoming burdensome. In the midst of this old junk—to give it its deserved title—I made myself as comfortable as possible, and erected my camp-bed.

I had no cause to complain of boredom in the course of my rather strange form of incarceration. Throughout the day there was much to see and much to hear. A constant stream of people flowed into the office, to lay complaints or to seek advice. El Hannish listened with untiring patience to the long and rambling explanations which his visitors gave; at the end, his decision or advice was generally given in a brief sentence.

There is much room for doubt that all the various cases received a judicious and "regulation" settlement. In fact, I have cause to believe that the contrary was more often the case. At the same time this manner of contact between public and official seems to me to possess several commendable features. Visitors had no need to wait in this and that anteroom, to be sent from one place to another, they were not required to fill in numerous forms; they had not to guard against a hundred and one regulations. Here it was possible to have one's wishes or complaints dealt with straight away by the particular authority competent to deal with them.

Late in the afternoon, when the day's work was over and the welcome kat hour approached, the Chief Constable's friends, officers, officials and merchants, began to arrive, frequently in such numbers that not a single va-



cant place remained in the room. The company chewed their kat, and during this time discussed the day's events, news of which, in the absence of newspapers, was in this way put into circulation.

Naturally, the fact of my arrival soon became well known in the city, and the wildest rumours concerning my person and the purpose of my secret journey had been broadcast. Daily a large crowd assembled outside the police station, and stared at the windows in the hope of catching a glimpse of the strange being who, as they seemed to think, must have dropped from the skies. I would gladly have satisfied the curiosity of the patient waiting crowd, but the Chief of Police would have none of it.

El Hannish, despite his friendly attitude, did not entirely trust me. And I gradually arrived at the reason for his lack of confidence. As soon as I could I did everything possible in order to re-establish contact with those friends whom I had gained during my first stay in San'a, in the hope that they would be able to obtain my release. At that time I had stayed as a paying guest, on orders from the King, in the house of a Jew named Soberi. In San'a it was not considered right that an "infidel" should stay in the house of a Mohammedan. I wanted to get in touch with Soberi, hoping to employ him as my mediator. But the chief constable refused to listen to the suggestion.

"Moreover", he said, pointing to his luxurious office, "you are far better off in the King's house than you would be in the house of a Jew."

Here, it is as well to mention that Mohammedans despise Jews, and in Yemen they form a lower section of

society. Some years ago a French explorer, J. Halévy, a Jew by race, who travelled to Yemen disguised as a Rabbi from Jerusalem, had some very unpleasant experiences as a result of anti-Jewish feeling.

Gradually I discovered the reason why I, a harmless private person, was treated as a dangerous suspect. No one would believe me when I stated that I was a German. El Hannish repeatedly challenged me to declare my true nationality. I told them that my passport placed the matter beyond doubt; but that document had been taken from me, and no one appeared to know exactly where it was. But in any case my reference to the passport merely drew smiles, which seemed to imply that even such documents could not be relied upon to tell the truth.

But at last I saw light. From various hints I discovered that they suspected me of being a British spy! Evidently they stood in constant awe of their powerful neighbour in the south, and in their minds attributed to him all kinds of bold plans and intentions, which there is little doubt that that neighbour not even meditated, let alone fostered.

My previous movements, it seemed, the authorities in Yemen regarded as highly suspicious. That anyone should undergo the hardships and fatigue of long desert journeys out of sheer love of the thing and for adventure was totally incomprehensible to the people here. There must be, they told themselves, some mysterious purpose lying behind it all.

Meanwhile the chief constable seemed to have received orders to establish my real identity. Anyhow, one day he told me of two strangers who he "believed"

were Germans (naturally, the San'a authorities were not in any real doubt concerning their nationality), and he proposed to take me to them. I was delighted, but at the same time rather astonished, as previously they had done everything possible to keep me isolated from the outer world.

We started out on the following morning. In addition to the chief constable, two soldiers were attached as a guard. Instead of passing through the principal part of the town we took a roundabout route in order to prevent me from coming into contact with the people any more than was necessary. Starting from the Bab el Yemen, close to which I had been held under arrest, we passed alongside the city wall and came to a big square beyond the Imâm's palace, which separates the Arab city from the Jewish quarter.

Here was the house in which my compatriots were lodging: a fine white building standing in a splendid garden. The house formerly belonged to the young Crown Prince, Seif el Islam Mohammed, who, a year before, while he was Governor of Tahama, lost his life at Hodeida by going to the rescue of a friend who was in danger of drowning in the Red Sea.

One of the two Germans, a representative of a firm in Hamburg, turned out to be an old friend whom I had met in Jedda, the port for Mecca, where he had received me hospitably on my last journey. He had recently been joined by the principal of the firm, Herr Hansen, who was paying a short visit to San'a. He did everything in his power to help me; and I mention his name here with gratitude. Very naturally, the two men were surprised to see me.

The fine, large rooms of the house were furnished with Southern Arabian carpets ("Mocheli", as they are called), which were coloured black and red. This simple colour scheme of white, black and red, together with the general lack of other house furnishings, causes that quiet, almost melancholy atmosphere which is typical of the East. To me, though, there was something infinitely attractive about the house. It was, for one thing, scrupulously clean, a condition to which I had grown almost an entire stranger. It was a joy which I fully appreciated. And for the first time after a very long interval I was served with European dishes. However, my body had become so weak after months of privation that I could eat very little of them.

Of course, we made all sorts of plans to accomplish my release. And during the whole course of our rather protracted conversation the Chief Constable did not for a single moment take his eyes off me. Perhaps he feared that I might escape. But to escape, I should have needed in the circumstances a magic cloak or a magic carpet at the very least. The man possibly thought that these Europeans with their mysterious powers were capable of anything.

My two countrymen were very keen for me to take up my abode in their house. But for that the King's permission was needed. Such permission was refused: that is to say the request simply remained unanswered.

Hansen, who had come from Hodeida to San'a by car, had another plan. A short time before, by the way, a permanent motor road had been constructed between the Capital and the coast.

It winds its way from Hodeida to Obal and Zebid,

then turns to the south in the direction of Aden, and makes a wide detour round the base of the Jebel Harraz. Hansen planned to return to Hodeida in about six days' time, and he wanted to take me with him in his car. But all his efforts to obtain the King's permission for this proved futile. The King, so it seemed, was exceedingly angry with me.

After this visit, which had been arranged at the instance of the Chief Constable, there can hardly have been any further doubt as to my nationality. Also, it seemed evident that the authorities would sooner or later come to the conclusion that I was not in the service of any foreign power and that I did not meditate injury to the country, but that my sole purpose was to learn something more about the world. Nevertheless, I heard nothing of what had been established concerning me, or of what it was intended to do with me.

While I continued to exist in doubt about my future fate, the town staged a big celebration.

We already know that the Imâm—as his name implies—who is both the spiritual and the secular ruler, is constantly endeavouring to extend his secular authority and to add territory to his kingdom. In consequence, Yemen, at that time at least, was continuously in the throes of war. To the north of Yemen lie the two large, fertile and populous land-areas of Jof and Nejran.

These districts are wrapped in a cloak of mystery. All that is known of them for certain is that they were the location of a fabulous empire which flourished in an epoch previous to the Sheban era. Inscriptions which have been discovered show that the ancient inhabitants

of these parts were the possessors, even in the days of the earliest Egyptian dynasties, of a rich and well-founded culture which spread over the whole of Arabia and Palestine and which probably had an extensive influence in parts of the neighbouring Africa. It has been claimed that they were the first to employ writing, which spread from them to the peoples of the Old World.

Owing to the indefinite character of the frontiers, these districts, too, are the cause of friction; and the valuable Nejran, in particular, has long been desired by Ibn Saud, the powerful ruler of Saudi Arabia. With the object of forestalling him, the Imâm of Yemen equipped an expeditionary force and placed its command in the hands of his best general, the youthful Prince Achmed, who on the death of his older brother became Heir to the Throne.

News had now arrived that Prince Achmed had gained a great victory and had annexed the whole of Nejran. One may imagine the King's joy, especially as this victory had enabled him to beat his great Central Arabian rival. Bursting with pride at the brave deeds of his "lion-hearted" son and his splendid troops, he ordered the Prince's victory to be celebrated throughout the land. (It was later established that the conquest of Nejran had merely been a cheap victory over a couple of Bedouin tribes; but that was not made known at the time, and the people of Yemen probably remained in ignorance.)

The streets of San'a were on this day of celebration the scene of great festivity. The King himself was ill and unable to take part in person in his subjects' jubilation, and in their parades and processions. From the window

of my prison I could see little, but I heard the unbroken rattle of rifle-fire. The firing of rifles is an indispensable part of every Arab festival. Each soldier—and there were many in San'a—sacrificed a couple of rounds on this important day. And, moreover, he had to pay for them out of his own slender pay, for the King, it should be stated, is a man of economy.

The knowledge, however, had no sobering effect on the enthusiasm of the crowds. They paraded through the streets, in groups large and small, executed national dances, and sang the fine old war songs. The *Sarmel*, the Yemen national anthem, was taken up everywhere, and sung in chorus. The Yemenites say that the singing of this hymn alone is enough to force the enemy to flight.

On the evening of this day of celebration the city was ablaze with lights. Bonfires were lit on housetops, towers, and on the city walls. Rows of yellow, flickering lights were ranged terrace by terrace, growing smaller as the altitude increased, until, finally, it was hard to distinguish them from the stars. I sat alone in the Chief Constable's room and cast my mind back to my first visit to this remarkable city, when as the honoured guest of the King I saw and experienced much. In the next chapter I have more to say about that first visit to San'a.

## IX.

### Imâm Yahya

**E**VEN by the official route, which I used on my first journey to Yemen, there are many difficulties which stand in the traveller's way; and the success of his entry into the forbidden land depends a great deal on chance, or more precisely, on the mood which the ruler happens to be in at the time.

I very nearly suffered the fate which many of my predecessors had met. When I arrived by ship from Port Said, the Governor of Hodeida first of all declined to allow me on land. Not until I had produced letters from influential Yemenites in Egypt and Arabia did he appear to believe that I was a person of some standing, and only then did he consent to send the letters to the Capital. But not much is accomplished by the simple action of landing at Hodeida. Without the King's express permission it is impossible to see anything of the land; and such permission is more often than not refused. This sharp control is not confined to foreigners; the country's own citizens are by no means at liberty to do exactly as they please. For instance, one of the King's subjects may not enter or leave the Capital without a document signed by the King entitling him to do so. And the same rule ap-



plies to travel in the country. Travel abroad is absolutely forbidden to the ordinary Yemenite. The King, or Imâm, insists on knowing as much as possible of what is taking place within his own realm. Nothing must be kept from him. In all probability if anyone sneezes the fact is reported to him. This state of affairs does not arise from any tyrannical disposition, as many European travellers have been a little too quick to assume. One must remember that the Kingdom of Yemen has only existed in its present state for a short time, and that dangers threaten it from all sides.

Again I was fortunate. After a long, anxious wait, permission arrived from the Imâm for me to proceed to San'a. The mules and drivers which I needed for the eight day journey from Hodeida to San'a I had to provide for myself. The Governor gave me two soldiers for an escort. The custom of the country is for the traveller to journey by the quickest and shortest route to San'a, there to announce his arrival to the King, and to discuss all further plans with him personally. The soldiers who accompanied me had the task of seeing that I did not dally en route, that I wasted no unnecessary time in satisfying my love of exploration, and that I kept to the straight and narrow path which the King had specified for my use.

When I arrived in San'a I was sent (as I have already told) as "the King's guest" to take up quarters in the house of the man Soberî (whom I have also mentioned). Only very distinguished visitors are entertained at the expense of the State, and they are accommodated in a special house set aside for the purpose. I was also provided with a guard consisting of several tall and imposing

soldiers. It is an unwritten law that the visitor stays inside his house and does not step out into the street until the moment when the King summons him to an audience. Generally several days pass before that happens. It has happened that the envoy of a foreign Power, who had come to discuss some business disagreeable to the King, has been allowed to wait as long as two weeks in such confinement. Perhaps the object was to cool his ardour.

However, during the time I spent in waiting for the summons, I had an opportunity of seeing, through the window of the house in which I had been instructed to live, the ruler of the country as he passed on his way to the mosque for the Friday service. He drove in an open, old-fashioned carriage drawn by a team of four horses, and proceeded slowly through the streets followed by an escort of cavalry and foot-soldiers. All who saw him saluted, and he returned their greetings by placing the palm of his hand on his turban.

As soon as I approached the window, one of my soldiers quickly stepped up behind me to see whether I had a camera or any similar apparatus in my hand. For it is strictly prohibited to photograph the King; and on no account can permission to take his picture be obtained. In contrast to the majority of his colleagues (the ultra-religious Ibn Saud not excepted) the Imâm of Yemen is the only reigning prince whose photograph I have never seen in the newspapers, though his name is frequently mentioned.

At the end of four days I received my summons to an audience. At the appointed time, at nine o'clock in the morning, I was at the palace. A dense crowd of peo-

ple were assembled in the palace square. For the most part they were curious idlers who regularly gathered outside the palace at this hour, which was the usual time for persons to be received by the King. Apart from the idlers, there were distinguished Arabs, richly dressed, and mounted on excellent horses, and officers with messages, who impatiently elbowed their way through the crowd. There were many others, too, who waited to be admitted, since at a certain hour it is the King's practice to receive any of his subjects, even down to the poorest beggar, who has a petition to make. The custom is a very old one, probably a survival of a tradition held by the earliest Asiatic despots, and it is to be found in all parts of Arabia, save where modern systems of government have been introduced.

With untiring patience the King listens to the varied wishes and complaints, which are usually recited to him in great detail in the expressive Arabian tongue. And no one leaves him without the impression that his business has received a sympathetic hearing. Sick persons are frequently brought in to him, for the King enjoys the reputation of being a miracle doctor. Many are the stories of wonderful cures which he has accomplished by placing a charm against the breasts of those suffering from illness. At the same time, of course, the King hears a great deal of what is taking place in his country, and many things which he would hardly learn if he were to follow the example of other rulers and cut himself off from contact with his people.

Having managed to edge my way through the crowd, I came to the palace entrance itself, where I was handed on from one soldier to another, until finally I was taken

in charge by a secretary who prepared me for the audience. This secretary stood, at the time, high in the King's favour; and in addition to his ordinary duties he did business in cloth and in certain other goods which brought him in a substantial income. In the streets he was invariably to be seen in costly robes, riding a well-bred Arab pony. But such splendour generally came to a sudden end, for the King's displeasure had a way of descending suddenly upon the heads of ambitious upstarts, whose wealth was confiscated and employed for the common good.

The secretary escorted me to an anteroom, where I was left to wait for a while, and then through several corridors to the King's apartment. Passing from room to room I was struck by the lack of luxury and display at the court of this, the second biggest independent ruler in Arabia. There was nothing in the nature of "window-dressing." Evidently little importance was attached to outward appearances. The atmosphere, too, had nothing "official" about it; on the contrary, one could not help feeling surprised at the simplicity and matter-of-factness of everything. The palace, incidentally, was originally built by the Turks as a hospital, and was used temporarily as the residence of the Turkish Stadtholder.

The audience room itself was the essence of simplicity: round the walls were cushions; the centre of the room was simply carpeted; and the only article of wooden furniture was a low writing-desk at which the King was seated. On the wall, above him, hung the silver sword, the symbol of his power. But in this plain frame he created an impression of dignity and majesty. After an eventful life (he was then in his sixty-seventh year)

continuous strain had left its mark, and at the time of my visit he seemed in rather poor health. The furrowed face with its noble features was partly hidden in a frame of grey beard; the full mouth with its rather protruding upper lip was pleasing and expressive during conversation; but during periods of silence it had something hard and cruel about it. Coal-black eyes, close together, placed above a rather thick nose, pierced the visitor with their stare. They could at times flash angrily, but that was the only sign which he gave of emotion; his attitude otherwise was calm and deliberate. His dress was little different from that of his subjects. He wore the local *Abah*, the long, flowing robe (which, incidentally, was well-worn) and the white turban of the Said, the noble, only that in his case the two ends of the turban were allowed to hang down over the right ear. This fashion, the so-called *Zuabab*, is the sign of royal dignity.

The King greeted me with a friendly "*Marhaba*. Be welcome", and with a motion of the hand invited me to be seated. He never rises to meet a foreigner, not even to greet foreigners of high rank. Foreigners are, of course, infidels, and in the eyes of a strict Mohammedan belong to a lower order.

Actually it is the custom for a foreign guest, whom the Imâm receives, to compose a poem about him, or to have one prepared, which is recited during the audience. (Unfortunately, I had left that undone.)

Poetry is to Arabs roughly the same as music to Central Europeans. It is essentially a national art. Everything which in any way stands out from the ordinary, be it a public event, a thought, an emotion, a march across the desert or the entry of a prince into his city, finds expres-

sion in verse. Even the sermons of the Prophet Mohammed himself were delivered in unexceptionable verse; and we may be certain that he would not have been listened to otherwise. And what was true more than thirteen hundred years ago is practically true to-day. It is as important for the Arab to know how to compose poetry as it is for the educated European to know how to handle prose.

I had given as my excuse for asking permission to enter Yemen the reason that I wished to study the music of the country. But the King made no reference to that during the audience. Later, though, he sent his son, Prince Seif el Islam Mohammed, to question me about my sound-recording apparatus. The only question which the King appeared to value was, how long did I intend to stay in San'a? Leave to stay is always restricted to a definite time. But as the King seemed in a good mood I boldly asked for permission to travel in the country. That the King promptly refused, saying that the country was far too unsafe, and that he could not accept responsibility for me. And so I had to content myself with viewing the Capital. It was then that I formed the plan to explore Yemen, with or without the King's permission.

During the audience I had an opportunity of observing the King at the work of government. Messengers came and went, bringing with them documents, which in most cases were just ordinary slips of paper. The King read what there was to read, and decided the matter then and there, indicating his decision simply by penning a few strokes underneath in red ink. This method of dealing with the State's business aroused my admiration. The

King had no need to wade through thick files which had previously made slow progress from department to department and from official to official. Most decisions were rendered orally, and without long and complicated arguments. There were one or two questions, and the answer was immediately forthcoming. By this method personal government was made possible.

The title Imâm means that its bearer is a direct descendant of the Prophet, and since Mohammed had no sons, of his grandson Hussein, the son of his daughter Fatima. The dignity of Imâm, therefore, is associated with the narrow ties of blood. Not only has he inherited his blood, but it is also said that the Prophet's spirit is reincarnated in him, although reincarnation is subject to certain restrictions. Originally there were fifteen virtues which a descendant of the Prophet had to show in order to be able to claim the title Imâm. Of these the most important were that he should live as a simple and ordinary man, and that he should be a "fighter for the faith"; then only could the spirit of Mohammed become regenerated in him. The Arabic word "Imâm" signifies a pattern or example for all to copy (as the Prophet himself was).

The reincarnation doctrine in this form is accepted only by the Shiites, who belong principally to the eastern branch of the Mohammedan religion, and who lean towards the Asiatic sphere of thought. Islam, as is known, in its early days was divided into two groups: Shiites and Sunnites. The difference between them is that the Shiites refuse to recognise the Caliphate of the Sunnites, but, instead, look upon the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali ibn Abu Talib, who was expelled from the Caliphate, as Moham-

met's lawful successor. And so the Shiïtes recognized Ali as first Imâm, that is as the supreme spiritual head, whose title was inherited by his two sons, Hassan and Hussein, and then by direct descendants of the latter (Hassan left no children).

This dynasty came to an end when the twelfth Imâm, Mohammed el Madhi ("the envoy"), was murdered by the Abbasidic Caliphate. The Persian Shiïtes believed that he was gathered up into Heaven, where he, Lord of the Ages, awaited the bidding of Allah to return and cleanse the world of unbelief and sin. This was another version of the Messiah doctrine taken over from the Jews.

But there were many Shiïtes who preferred an animate Imâm, from whom they might take their example. There were several closely-related descendants of the Prophet who could claim, through their mode of life and in other ways, to have inherited the spirit of Mohammed; and before long there appeared several Imâms, each of whom won a certain following.

This happened, too, in Southern Arabia. In the thirteenth century the Said (that is descendant of Hussein) Yahya ibn-al-Hussein al-Qasim-er-Rassi came from Iraq, and after some years was accepted as Imâm. He formed a distinct branch, the Saidites, within the Shiïte community; and the only way in which the Saidites differed from the other Shiïtes was that they recognized the Imâm Yahya and his successors as their spiritual heads and as lawful representatives of the Prophet. But the Imâm's adherents were confined to the mountainous part of Southern Arabia; the inhabitants of the coastal districts remaining Sunnites. With the exception of the Im-



imate of Oman, the position is the same to-day. The present Imâm Yahya is a direct descendant, or at least a descendant of the first Imâm Yahya er-Rassi, and so the Rassite dynasty is probably by far the oldest reigning house in the world.

The Imâm Yahya, who adopted the additional title of King in 1926, took over the reins of government in 1902. At that time the Turks tried energetically to gain complete sovereignty over Yemen, but they never quite succeeded, despite the fact that the country had existed in a state of total anarchy for nearly a century prior to the Turkish occupation. Fighting between the Turks and the Imâm continued with little interruption until 1911, when the Italian invasion of Tripoli was viewed as a menace to the whole Islamitic world. It was then that the wise and moderate Governor of Yemen, Izzet Pasha, who later became one of the Turkish generals in the Great War, managed to come to an understanding with the Imâm Yahya, and a truce of ten years was agreed between them. It was a compromise. The Imâm was allowed a certain measure of independence (he was granted spiritual and a certain amount of judicial) power, while the military and political authority remained in the hands of the Turks.

During the World War Britain exerted every effort to divorce the Imâm Yahya from Turkey and to win his support for the Arab revolt. The Imâm resisted pressure, and drew attention to the Treaty of 1911 which he had concluded with the Turks and which was still in force. The Yemenites not only defended their land against Brit-

ish attack, they went still further and carried war to the hinterland of the Protectorate of Aden.

It is hard to say what moved the Imâm to take this dangerous step against the powerful British Empire. Probably he decided that, unlike so many other Arabian princes, he had no wish to remain a ruler by the grace of England. Ibn Saud was fortunate and clever enough to accept British aid and, more particularly, British financial assistance, and to employ it in the establishment of his Central Arabian kingdom without compromising himself too much, in the eyes of his Wahhabites through his alliance with the infidel.

But in Yemen circumstances were different. England had long held a protectorate over Aden, which she steadily extended along the coastal region of Southern Arabia, until it actually included territory which had formerly belonged to Yemen. The Imâm, therefore, cannot be blamed for fearing that expansion might go on until the whole of the remaining Yemen became included in the Protectorate.

For keeping to the undertaking agreed upon with the Turks, the Imâm, who had gained complete independence on the collapse of the old Ottoman empire, was forced to surrender the harbour of Hodeida to England. So Yemen lost its only valuable outlet to the sea; and the new kingdom seemed in danger of collapse. The district in which Hodeida is situated was handed over to the Sultan of Asir, who was on friendly terms with England.

In 1925, however, the Imâm succeeded in reconquering the lost territory of Hodeida, and England took no steps to prevent this. Relations with England, though, remained strained, and there were frequent frontier "in-

cidents." Punitive squadrons of airplanes were sent from Aden to Yemen, but they soon lost their power to terrify the inhabitants, who on hearing the roar of the approaching machines dived for the protection of their mountains and rocks; and the few mud huts which the bombs destroyed were soon replaced with new ones.

Eventually the Imâm found a willing friend in Italy, whose Erythrean colony stood close by on the other side of the Red Sea. In 1926 there was a bilateral treaty of friendship, in which Italy recognized Yemen independence, engaged to supply Yemen with arms and munitions at moderate prices, and in return received preferential treatment in economic and commercial undertakings. One can hardly go wrong in assuming that Great Britain, though silent, was an unwilling spectator of this arrangement, since she herself has recently concluded a separate agreement with Yemen.

Italy hastened to take full advantage of her treaty, and tried to plant a firm footing in the "Hinterland"—as she then regarded Yemen—of her colony Erythrea. But owing to the Imâm's not altogether unjustified aversion to foreign influence in his realm, the Italian success was sadly small. The Imâm needed war supplies more than anything else, and these Italy sent. But she sent, also, doctors, engineers, machinery and airplanes, free of charge, for she knew the Imâm's unwillingness to part with money.

In Yemen the doctors found no scope for their work, and they disappeared, one after the other. The engineers had hardly more luck, for the country was still too backward for machinery, and in most cases their machinery did not reach the Capital. Even to-day the traveller sees

half-open packing-cases of machine parts lying on the roadside between Hodeida and San'a; and the cases bear Italian marks and directions. The burdens were found to be too heavy for the caravans, and so they were just dumped by the way. Bedouins then broke open the cases, but they found in them only cog-wheels and metal parts, for which they had not the slightest use.

Most of the airplanes, on the contrary, reached the Capital; and the Imâm, realizing their military value, took a keen interest in them. He sent several young Yemenites to Egypt to study flying, and he established a sort of flying school in San'a.

Unfortunately, though, Allah pronounced against this novelty. One day, when two German airmen crashed over the city, and it was found that their passenger was a member of the Royal House, the King there and then forbade all further flying. The few remaining machines still lie rusting in their original sheds.

It can be seen, then, that it is not such a simple matter to change this old theocracy into a modern state. In Yemen the first essentials are lacking. The main obstacle in the path of any change is, of course, religion. The overwhelming majority of the Yemen population regard the Imâm as the successor and representative of the Prophet, and the forerunner of the Mahdi, the final Imâm, who one day will come to complete the work of Mohammed. Thus, the Imâm is the instrument who carries into effect the will of Mohammed, that is the will of Allah. Where religious views clash with innovations—and there are very few instances where they agree—he decides against the new idea, and he has to decide in that way in order to preserve his own authority intact.

The Imâm, to a certain extent, finds himself in a position similar to that in which Abdul Hamid, the last great Ottoman Sultan, found himself. The latter, too, was continually being pressed by Europe to adopt reforms, while he well knew that "modernization" would, besides putting an end to his own power, irretrievably undermine the foundations of the Ottoman empire.

And one should not lose sight of the fact that Yemen has been more or less constantly at war ever since 1918, and that she has frequently had as opponent Powers such as Great Britain to contend with. Admittedly, military operations were to a great extent dictated by the desire for territorial aggrandizement and increased national prestige. But then the Imâm's own neighbour in Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud, to say nothing of other, ultra-civilized States, had been doing exactly the same thing.

The celebrated economy—one might almost say niggardliness—of the Imâm may be directly attributed to this need for defending himself against his foes and to the necessity for stabilizing his power at home. The King knows, as well as any of his colleagues in other parts of the world, that wars cost money. So he has saved all his life, and has gradually accumulated in the vaults of his palace a vast treasure of Maria-Theresa dollars (the Vienna Mint has coined on the average three million of these coins annually since the War) and gold sovereigns which have been received in exchange for goods. Most of the claims made on the exchequer are against orders for up-to-date military equipment and for maintenance of the Army, for which "Abu Buchul," the Father of Victory, as the Imâm is known to his people, has always something left over. Otherwise he parts with money

with the utmost reluctance, and he encourages his subjects to lead modest existences and discourages them to hoard riches.

Anyone who amasses a fortune has the pleasure of knowing that he may one day become a political suspect, for money means power, and the King jealously maintains his monopoly of this. In order to remove temptation from such a person, his riches are confiscated and handed over to the State treasury, to be used for the benefit of the nation. And in this way there is a general social levelling of the people.

The soldiers receive very little pay. Actually, it would be enough to satisfy their modest mode of living, were it not for the pernicious habit of eating *kat*, which keeps them paupers. In the course of the many frontier scuffles in which they have been involved, it has frequently happened that Yemen soldiers have sold their weapons and munitions to their opponents in order to have money with which to satisfy their craving for the poisonous weed. But they have another trick which would be hard to use outside the East: The Mohammedans are very loath to leave their dead in the enemy's land and wish to see them buried in their native soil. So the Yemenites, whenever possible, carry the bodies of their fallen foes into Yemen territory, and then sell them to their opponents at a high price.

Even the state officials in Yemen are subject to an almost unbelievable economy. For instance, Raghīb Bey, Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, receives a monthly salary of about \$22.00. Raghīb Bey is of Turkish birth; during the War he was Turkish Governor of Hodeida, and like many others of his coun-

trymen, finding himself in Yemen after the collapse of the Ottoman empire, he placed his services at the disposal of the new State. These Turks, owing to their experience and knowledge as soldiers and civil servants, have been very valuable servants to the King.

On our New Year's Day Raghîb Bey paid me a visit, to chat to me about Germany, for whom he had preserved a great affection. He was at one time attached to the Turkish Consulate in Berlin. A very intelligent and educated man, he is, like most Orientals, an able, effective diplomat and a skilled student of human nature. Despite his age (he is well over sixty) he still has a youthful freshness of manner, and with his striking features and his short white beard is an imposing figure. This is especially noticeable on Fridays, when he takes part in the ceremonial procession of the King to the Selamlîm prayer at the Mosque al Kebîr. Raghîb Bey on these occasions wears a long black robe and a white turban, and he rides a very showy Arab pony.

That the King has found loyal and unselfish servants like Raghîb Bey and others of his stamp, speaks in the King's own favour. There is no doubt that the Imâm Yahya is a ruler with a great personality, charm, and understanding for the needs of the times. And at the same time it is worthy of notice that he has never been beyond the frontiers of his own country, and only knows of the outside world from hearsay. And no doubt there was much of the fantastic and legendary about that hearsay.

At all events the Imâm has succeeded at least in establishing the foundations of a real State in a country which had known nothing but rebellion and disorder for cen-

turies, and in which the Turkish overlords were only able to preserve some semblance of their authority by the exercise of an iron and unrelenting rule. That he only succeeded as the result of a strictly autocratic régime must be apparent to everyone. And that methods difficult to reconcile with the methods of modern civilisation had frequently to be used will also be understood. It is not possible to judge these matters by looking at them through European spectacles.

Among these rather forceful methods is the much-discussed "Hostage System," which has so often caused righteous indignation and offence to the moral susceptibilities of the chance traveller in Yemen. Nearly every high dignitary, and the tribal princes, big and small, almost without exception, have to send a son or a brother as a hostage, as a guarantee, so to speak, for good behaviour. These hostages are interned, generally as far away as possible from the place of residence of the particular person for whom they are held, in the Capital or in one of the other cities. They are allowed to move freely in the city of their internment, but they are not allowed to leave it.

If one of these young men is fortunate enough to be placed in the neighbourhood of the King, he always has the chance of mapping out a splendid career for himself. It is calculated that about four thousand hostages are held as state captives. This system is, at all events, an effectual means of ensuring the enforcement of state authority. It is in effect a barbaric means of educating the people to be useful citizens and loyal subjects. It is a means of education which needs time, and several generations may have to pass before the same discipline and



loyalty can be achieved by voluntary methods. Whether that time will come before the death of the present King is a matter for speculation.

The extent to which the almighty Imâm places everything and everybody at the service of the state (and, admittedly, war requirements have the largest influence in this matter) is exemplified by the régime which the Imâm has established in his own harem. The Prophet's representative is allowed by the Koran to have four official wives and a number of unofficial ones. The number of these is not known, but it is said that there are about thirty of them. But here, as distinct from the practice in other harems, there is much work to be done. The King requires them and, of course, their numerous servants, to make uniforms for the soldiers. To encourage them they are awarded payment, (though it does not amount to much) on a piece-work basis.

This has often been cited as a typical example of the King's "close-fistedness". That he is uncommonly careful and the reasons for his economy are facts which have already been mentioned. But in this case it seems to me that the alleged avarice of the King has brought about highly praiseworthy results. Under other circumstances, there is little doubt that all these women would have practically nothing to do; and here, instead of lying about all day and getting bored, as they do in the harems of most of the other Oriental rulers, they have the opportunity of doing useful work. And the King's wives set a good example to the other women in this young state, whose very existence is constantly menaced.

The King's wives have presented him with thirteen sons. The number of his daughters is not known, as these

are not considered worth mentioning. Whether there is among his sons a successor who will be worthy to step into the shoes of that unique ruler the Imâm Yahya is very much open to question. Of some of these princes mention will be made in the succeeding chapter.

## X.

### Islam's Eastern Bulwark

MY AUDIENCE with the King, during the first visit to San'a, was apparently carried out to our mutual satisfaction. The ruler who in the ordinary way was so mistrustful of strangers gave no signs that he suspected me of chicanery or of spying out the land on behalf of some foreign power. There was only one point which remained to be cleared up. In my request for permission to enter the country there was mention of a certain apparatus for the recording of sound. That, according to Yemenite views, was a very mysterious matter. Moreover, anything in the nature of an "apparatus" was regarded as a European work of the devil, and they could never tell what evil was hidden behind it.

In order to get to the root of this matter the King sent the Crown Prince, shortly after the audience, and asked him to pay me a visit. The Prince, who was accompanied by his friend and inseparable companion, Mohammed al Hajri, wore Yemen native dress: a long robe of black, yellow and white stripes, which was held by a gold and silver embroidered belt in which was the *Djambiyah*, the hooked dagger, in its finely inlaid gold sheath. This dress, quite in place on this handsome Eastern prince,

seemed rather incongruous when worn with a pair of black European riding boots. This type of footwear seemed to have become the fashion for the Royal Family; the Prince's companion, too, wore boots of similar pattern in conjunction with native dress.

The Prince's name was Seif el Islam Mohammed. "Seif el Islam" is a kind of surname, which is used only by the Heir to the Throne, and it means "Sword of Islam". It represents the future ruler's primary task, that of fighter for his faith. Seif el Islam at that time was a young man about twenty years old, but was already Governor of Tahama, the coastal district round Hodeida. Short of stature, his small features, on which an early growth of black beard had made its appearance, and his uncommonly animate black eyes, as well as his delicately-formed figure, bore the marks of his aristocratic breeding; and in his attitude and bearing there was that easy self-confidence which is so characteristic of the Arabs as a whole. He had an attractive, kindly disposition and took a keen interest in the affairs of the world.

Actually he was the only member of the Royal House who had been abroad and who knew Europe. He had been to Italy, where he had visited Mussolini, at the time when Rome began to take an interest in Yemen. Although the Prince had little of the soldier in this nature, but had more inclination for science and art, he was extraordinarily popular with the people. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, he later lost his life in the Red Sea. Had he succeeded to the Throne, Yemen might possibly have abandoned some of her exclusiveness and have opened her doors to the world which waits to explore the unseen treasures of a great past.

His younger brother, Seif el Islam Achmed, who became Heir on the death of Mohammed, was, by nature at least, a soldier. He has a reputation in the country for courage and daring and probably would have preferred to lead the life of a Bedouin chief, a life of fighting and wars of conquest. For that matter he had to wage war for his father, and that occupation absorbed nearly the whole of his time.

In an earlier chapter I have referred to the fact that his victory in the land which joins Yemen on the north was made the occasion of a big celebration, while I was under arrest in the police headquarters. However, during a recent expedition against that serious opponent Ibn Saud, his luck in war deserted him, and he won nothing but laurels. Whether this Prince Achmed, besides a love for soldiering, has inherited his father's wisdom and administrative skill, and whether he will be an equal success when he succeeds to the Throne are points of doubt.

Young Prince Mohammed, then on the threshold of a promising life, had come on instructions from the King, for me to show him my sound-recording apparatus. I had already taken several records, and I was able to reproduce for him some of his native folk songs. The Prince was delighted; and later he sent me several soldiers, who were reputed to be uncommonly good singers and musicians, in order for me to make some good records to take back with me to Europe.

Apparently the Prince's report satisfied the King, for I was permitted to stay in San'a as long as I pleased, a favour which is granted to few foreigners. At the same time, as a European, I was subjected to a constant watch,

and it was impossible for me to move a step without being observed. In addition, I was not permitted to leave the city and environs without the King's approval. On the other hand, there was so much to see within the city itself that I was not greatly tempted to leave.

For San'a is one of those few cities which do not disappoint the visitor who makes their closer acquaintance. With its spacious squares and its wide, straight streets along which mansions of four, five and six storeys have been erected side by side, it in no way reminds one of the familiar Arab cities with their network of narrow lanes and monotonous series of mud walls behind which are the houses of the wealthy. Moreover, San'a is undoubtedly one of the oldest cities in the world. It was standing at the time of the ancient Babylonians, though the remains of that past lie buried, for the most part, under the ruins caused by a former earthquake.

It is noteworthy, too, that the world's first skyscraper was built in San'a. The ancient Arab historian, Al Hamdani, has given a detailed description of this palace, "Ghamdan," which was erected during the time of the Sheban kings.

The King's palace stood at the south-east corner of San'a, in the shadow of the Jebel, the mountain on whose side the Holy City is situated. It had twenty storeys, and each storey was twenty feet in height. When the twentieth storey had been completed, so Al Hamdani relates, the master builder climbed early one morning to the top and saw that the shadow of the building reached as far as the distant Jebel Usor. "That is high enough for the fame and security of the King," he said, and he ordered the masons to finish off the building. He, however, in

ending off the building, erected on the top of the twentieth storey an open loggia the roof of which was constructed out of big alabaster tiles. Most of the houses in present-day San'a are crowned with similar loggias. The four sides of this wonder palace were stated to have been built of four distinct materials: the first in grey, the second in red, the third in black and the fourth in red stone. At each of the four corners at the base of the palace stood a stone lion.

The King, we are further told, had his throne placed in the loggia, and from that airy height he could watch the approach of a caravan along the old road, or observe when a hostile army drew near. When the King rested, that is "lay on his back," he could distinguish the grey or white doves which flew over the palace—so transparent was the alabaster roof.

In his description, which, incidentally, is amply adorned with legends, Al Hamdani states that the King's palace was built by foreign architects and masons who had recently come into the country. The statement is striking because it corresponds exactly to a belief which is still popular among certain sections of the people. They believe that there was a race, long since dead, who inhabited the country before the Arabs. They call these people the Adites, but that, probably, is just a name for them as a whole.

The spirits of these Adites are said still to haunt remote valleys, which most likely contain ancient ruins, which are carefully avoided by the Arabs. The Arab tradition has it that these Adites were great city builders who were responsible for all the splendid buildings of early times. An old legend which is still popular speaks

of a wonderful city called Iram, which is supposed to have existed in the middle of the desert. Another legend, which Al Hamdani also records, states that the Royal Palace was built by foreign Jins.

All these old tales point to the belief that the Arabian peninsula in very early times was peopled by an entirely different race, and that the Arabs arrived later and took over the architecture and culture of the former inhabitants. It is very probable that these Adites originally came from the north, but the clues are not enough to enable one to form any real conclusions on that point.

The fact remains, though, that architecture in Southern Arabia has stayed the same up to the present day. The Yemenites of to-day build in exactly the same manner as their predecessors of three and four thousand years ago did. The bases of their houses are constructed of stone, granite, green basalt, or yellow and red sandstone, while the upper part of the houses, which often reach to six storeys, is of clay. The skill which has been employed in construction may be gauged by the fact that neither iron nor concrete supports have been used to strengthen these tall buildings.

On the roof proper there is generally an open loggia, the chief rendezvous of the house-residents in that hot climate, tempered, however, by cool nights. For although San'a lies on the same latitude as Panama, it is situated at an altitude of some six thousand feet. The windows generally are in two parts. The lower part, which is mostly oblong in shape, is furnished only with wooden shutters. Above it is an oval window which has a thin pane of alabaster, the material which has been used for ages in place of glass. When the shutters are closed to exclude the sun,



a soft, "cathedral" light, filtered by the alabaster pane, is diffused in the room. House decoration, in artistic arabesques and wooden carvings, resembles in style the house ornamentation which is seen at the Alhambra in Spain.

San'a was for a time a distant outpost of Christianity. The new doctrine, during the time when the Abyssinian Viceroy Abraha resided in San'a, spread throughout Southern Arabia, despite violent opposition from the powerful Jewish community which existed there at the time. Abraha also ventured into Central Arabia, to preach Christianity there, but the first attempt was a failure. Nevertheless, the time seemed not far distant when the teachings of Christ would spread over the whole peninsula. And from Southern Arabia (in those days the main junction of world communications) it might have spread to India and the Far East, as did Islam. But Mohammet appeared soon after Abraha's departure, and drove Christianity out of Arabia and, indeed, out of its very birth-place, Palestine.

In San'a the remains of a Christian church are said still to exist beneath one of the mosques. But as entry into one of the Mohammedan places of worship is strictly prohibited, I was not able to put that statement to any sort of test. The King owns a collection of antique relics which have been discovered in San'a and environs; and among them there is supposed to be a figure of the Madonna. But whether it dates from that early Christian era, seems very doubtful. More probably it was brought in from some subsequent period from Abyssinia.

Just as Fez in North-West Africa marks the western boundary of the Mohammedan religion, so Yemen is Islam's eastern bulwark, a position which she has occupied

for many centuries. The many mosques with their tall minarets towering above the high houses and palaces give the city its character. They symbolize the supremacy and permanence of religious thought.

Religion is at the root of all things; it governs the smallest details of life. It is a factor which makes for greatness and, to a large extent, for strength and unity, but at the same time it holds a danger. The world does not stand still, and so the following problem arises: How may the claims of progress be satisfied without sacrificing religious principles? Whether this problem will be solved in the same happy way that it has been solved in Japan is Arabia's big question of the future.

Observance here of the Lord's Day, if I may so call it, which for the Mohammedans is a Friday, is particularly impressive. The Imâm, as spiritual head, leaves his palace at a certain hour to attend the great, and to a certain extent, public prayer meeting. Attended by richly-robed officials and singing soldiers, the Imâm joins the imposing procession as it makes its way through the big square which separates the real San'a, the Holy City, from the Ghetto, the Jewish quarter. The procession then passes through crowded streets and arrives at the big Mosque al Kebir, which is situated in the very center of the city. At this hour the whole of San'a is afoot. But only a small portion of the crowd is able to find a place in the mosque, and the rest assemble in the square outside and in the neighbouring streets. While the Prophet's Messenger recites the prayers there is absolute silence in the streets. The external character of the procession, in keeping with the nature of Islam, is a warlike one. The Imâm and his attendants are mounted on horses, and their

costly, bejewelled weapons flash in the sun—a sharp contrast to the ceremonious processions which the Catholic Church institutes on prominent Holy Days, the main purpose of which is to proclaim “peace to mankind.”

Al Kebir, San’a’s chief mosque, is said to have been built during Mohammed’s lifetime, that is during the seventh century. It is comparatively simple and lacking in ornament, and seems almost to clash with the other imposing and richly-adorned buildings which surround it. On the inner side of the wall which encircles the mosque there is a clearly defined line. A story is told of how this line came to exist, and I propose to repeat it here, as it affords a glimpse of the naïve pleasures which the early Mohammedans, at least, permitted themselves.

In the year 911 A.D., after the powerful Prince of Carmathion, Ibn Fadl by name, had conquered San’a, he had the courtyard between the wall and the mosque filled with three or four feet of water, and then he had all the young women of the city driven naked into the water. Ibn Fadl, we are told, thereupon gazed at the gratifying spectacle from the tower of the minaret, and taking full advantage of his right as conqueror, selected the best-looking girls and had them sent to his harem.

The many mosques in San’a are also used as schools for the young. The Turks, once they had established a firm footing in Yemen, introduced secular schools, but these were closed immediately after they left. In the education of the young generation in Yemen the Koran and other religious books form the basis of the instruction given. The Imâm himself is reputed to be a great scholar and an authority on religious-historical tradi-

tion. In local opinion the ruler must possess knowledge not a whit less than the greatest scholar in the land. The Imâm's library, said to be one of the largest in Arabia, is famous.

He is, in addition, a keen collector of old Arab manuscripts, and among the most valuable of them is a series of ten volumes of the history of old Yemen, compiled by the historian Al Iklil. But no foreign eye has ever seen these treasures.

As may be expected, religion is the basis upon which the administration of the law is founded. The Koran and its commentaries provide the only laws, and the head of the religion is automatically chief judge. The administration of justice is remarkably simple; there are no complicated formalities; no bulky documents are needed. The Imâm holds legal sessions on certain days, either in the courtyard of his palace, or under a tree in the big square of the city. He is assisted by one or two secretaries, while a few soldiers maintain order among the crowd. Anyone can bring forward a lawsuit, and after listening to the parties the Imâm pronounces judgement, *ad hoc* as it were, in a few brief sentences. In order to do that great experience and wisdom are necessary, for the Koran does no more than merely lay down certain general principles.

The punishments for serious crimes may by no means be described as light. Slander is punishable by cutting out the culprit's tongue, and theft may mean the loss of a hand (a practice which is also resorted to in Ibn Saud's country). Adultery is considered a crime which merits capital punishment; and in such cases the convicted person is buried all but the head, and then stoned.

Shortly before my arrival a Greek, who by way of exception had been given permission to visit San'a, was unwary enough to enter into unlawful relations with an Arab woman. Rumours of the affair got abroad, the culprit was chained hand and foot, bound on the back of a mule, and carried by a roundabout route to Hodeida and then deported. What happened to the unfortunate woman I cannot say.

There are several instances of curious interpretations of justice, of which the following is one: In San'a a certain man, before the eyes of the Imâm, shot another man who had insulted him, but at the same time severely wounded two soldiers who were standing behind the man who had offered the insult. The first man was acquitted, and for the very reason that he had hit three men with one shot. According to an old opinion, "he who strikes down several with a single stroke (translated into modern expression: with a single shot) is favoured by Allah"; and this sign of privilege had to be respected.

San'a, the Arab city, is enclosed in a wall which has eight gates. At each gate there is a guard which examines all ingoing and outgoing persons. As soon as darkness descends the gates are closed, and then no one is permitted to enter or leave the city. Caravans which are late in arriving have to pass the night outside. The many barracks, too, the *ordi* as they are called, are situated outside the city walls.

Close by the walls of the city are flower gardens, in the cultivation of which the Arabs have always been masters. Fruits of many sorts are grown there as well as

flowers, and nearly always there is a wealth of blossoms to be seen. Crowning all are the dark-green columns of the tall cypresses. Fountains and ornamental streams and lakes, which all Orientals so love, are also seen frequently.

All this fruitfulness can only be produced by artificial watering, and the monotonous creaking of the well-wheels, which are maintained in operation by a man and a camel, is a sound inseparably connected with San'a. In one of these gardens lie the remains of the two German airmen who crashed over the city several years ago.

Strictly separate from the Arab city, on the far side of the palace square already mentioned, also enclosed in a wall, is the Jewish quarter, to which entrance is made by a special gate. In the whole of Yemen there are some fifty thousand Jews, and historical evidence shows that Jews had settled in the country long before the advent of Mohammed. Some six thousand of them live in the ghetto of San'a.

The Southern Arabians regard the Jews as people of a lower grade, and despise them utterly, although both belong to the same Semitic race. Accordingly, the Jew has very limited privileges and is subject to strict regulations. Evidently there is a desire to prevent him from climbing upwards. An indication of the inferiority of his position is in the fact that he is not allowed to ride a camel or a mule, but has to rely on donkeys for his transport. Further, he is not permitted to carry arms or to serve in the army; on the other hand he is required to pay a high sum to the Imâm, who then condescends to see to his protection. He is called upon to perform the

most servile tasks, and though he is allowed to trade in the Arab city, he may never settle among Mohammedans.

The houses in the ghetto, the *Ka'a el Jahud* (City of the Jews), may only have two floors, and the synagogues are allowed in no wise to differ from the ordinary living houses. Consequently the streets in the ghetto, in contrast to those in the Arab city, make a monotonous and unattractive impression. The interior of the houses, however, is scrupulously clean. "The Jews must pay tribute," a distinguished Said told me, "in order that they may not forget their racial origin. It is also a reminder to them of the Prophet's tolerance and benevolence."

The Jews in Yemen are easy to recognize, for they are not allowed to wear silk clothing, though they wear earrings, "to prevent them being killed by mistake in time of war," the same Said explained. The men wear round their necks an iron ring about one inch in thickness, and hanging from it is a small leather bag containing a charm. The women go unveiled, but wear a covering over the hair. Silver and red striped trousers are visible below their black robes. On the head they wear a black, gaily-decorated scarf; while on the forehead they have a silver band with small pendants. The children wear a similar band.

In addition to wine the Jews distil, chiefly for their own consumption, a strong liqueur from dried grapes. On festival occasions the whole tribe assembles in one room, where, seated in a circle, in the centre of which mountains of nuts and sweetmeats are piled up, they sing old Jewish songs, and drink generously of their home-distilled brandy.

The Imâm is not willing to allow his Jews to leave the country; nor may they establish any communications with their compatriots in Palestine, or with the Zionist Movement; nor may they receive teachers or propagandists from abroad. Many of them have escaped secretly over the frontier; in such cases their whole property has been confiscated by the Imâm. On the other hand, one cannot escape the impression that a certain section of the Jews in San'a have, despite all restrictions and their contemptuous position, amassed considerable wealth.

When I asked an old Rabbi whether his co-religionists lived in contentment there, he replied: "We live in security and hope for a King of the Jews, who will rule over Yemen; we pray for it daily."

While I sat by the window of my police prison and cast my mind back to the first visit to San'a, the many lights which had appeared in celebration of the recent victory gradually died down, and only the stars remained to spread a soft light over the night sky. Deep silence lay over the walled city in which I was being held captive. Imprisonment did not depress me so much as the knowledge of the uncertainty of my position, for I could not fail to recognize the severity of the crime which I had committed in forcing my way into the Forbidden Land. Moreover, there was no representative of the German Government in San'a to whom I could apply for advice and help; nor, indeed, was there a representative of any Power who might have been able to assist me: the Imâm had no wish to cultivate connections with the outer world. However, the uncertainty was to come to an end more quickly than I had expected.



## XI.

### A Secret Sect

THE Imâm being ill at the time, he placed the settlement of my case in the hands of Kadi Abdullas, a leading judge. After five days of strict confinement the silence around me was for the first time broken by an official message which said that I was to leave on the next morning and proceed by the shortest and quickest route to Hodeida, the harbour city on the Red Sea. As, in any case, it would have been impossible for me to have undertaken any further exploration in Yemen at that time, the decision was one highly acceptable to me. My plan to penetrate into unknown parts of Yemen had at all events succeeded.

Roughly at the appointed time—an hour or two make no difference in these parts—mules and mule drivers and the soldiers of my guard were waiting and ready, and my baggage had been loaded. As usual there was a considerable crowd outside the police station, in fact a larger crowd than ever before, who were waiting to witness the final act of the drama. By that time “the mysterious stranger” had become the talk of the town.

As a final favour I was permitted to pay a farewell call on my German countrymen in San’a. The leavetak-

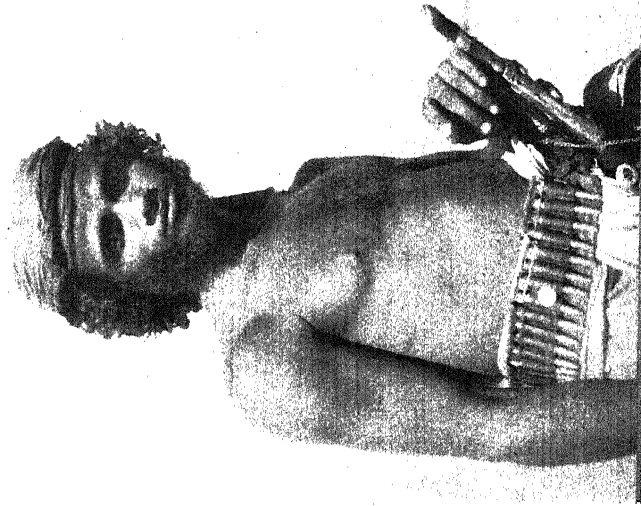
ing, incidentally, lasted until the next morning. As soon as we arrived at the former palace, in which Herr Hansen and his companion were staying, the soldiers who were with me were generously supplied with food, and so ample were the supplies that they spent the rest of the day in sleep in order to recover from their exertions. And so for the first time in weeks I enjoyed the luxury of sleeping in a real bed, and with the extraordinarily kind hospitality of my compatriots, as well as the homelike atmosphere of their house, I found the stay all too short.

Hansen proposed in any case to return to Hodeida by car in a few days' time, but all his efforts to secure permission to take me with him were of no avail. But, nevertheless, we arranged a provisional rendezvous. In five or six days I would probably reach the small place of Obal, in the Tahama, where the alleged motor road joined my own route. Hansen's programme would enable him to arrive there at about the same time, and the idea was for him to pick me up there and so save me from the most exhausting part of my journey, the part which took me through the burning heat of the lowlands.

Our small troop, despite precise instructions to the contrary, left the city twenty-four hours late, by the West Gate. We crossed the broad, fertile plain which surrounds San'a, and after proceeding a few miles came to a large walled-in reservoir, the size of a small lake, in which the rainfall was stored for use during the drought period.

The scene there, as at most places where water is found, was one of considerable animation. There were separate drinking places for men and animals, but both slaked their thirst with the same water. A couple of steps

*A soldier of the Yemenite king.*



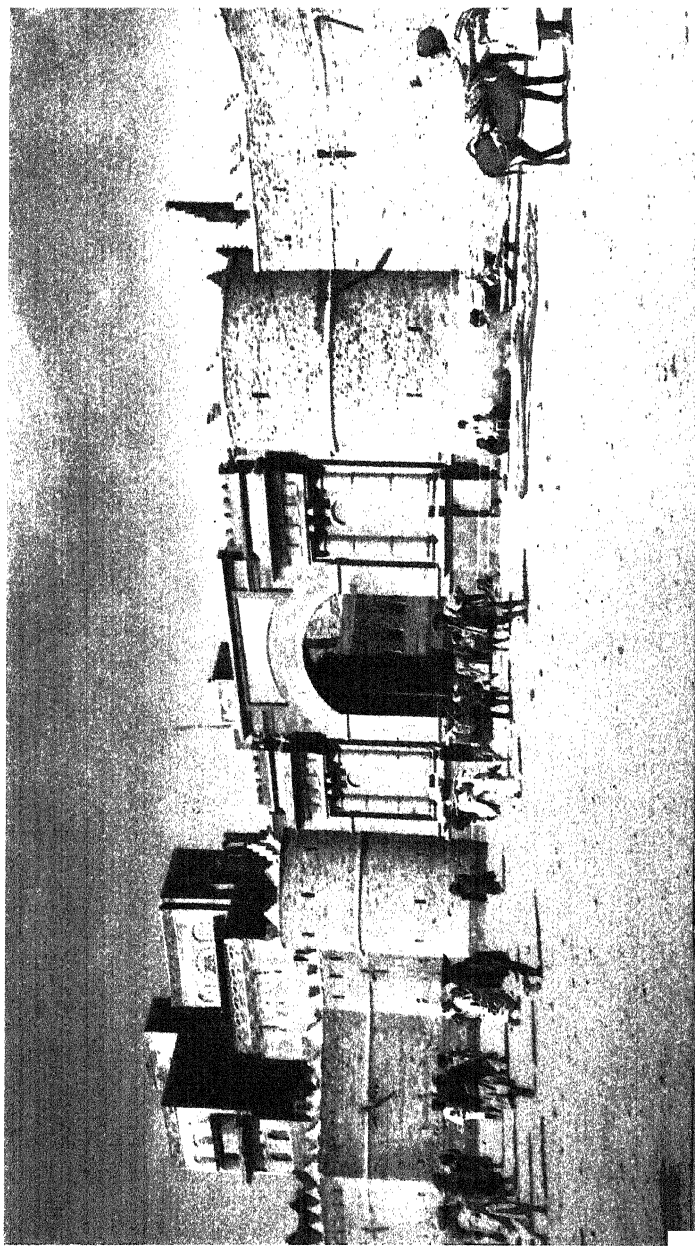
*A Garui Bedouin at Harib.*

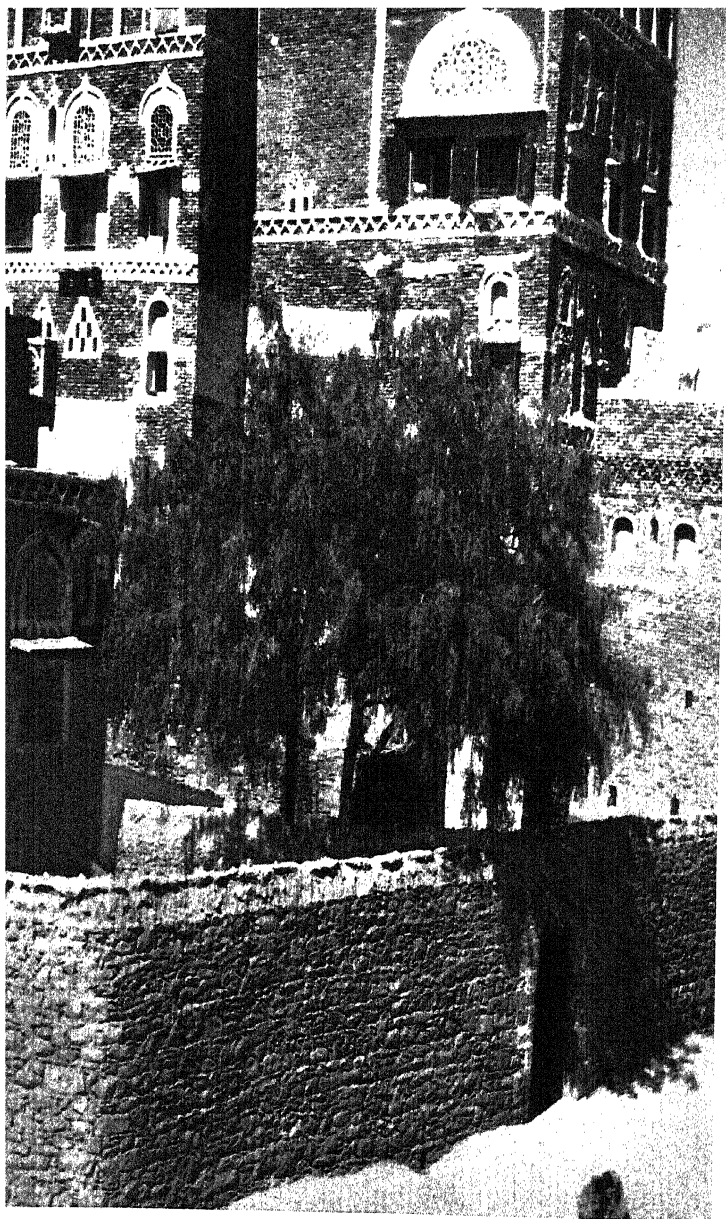




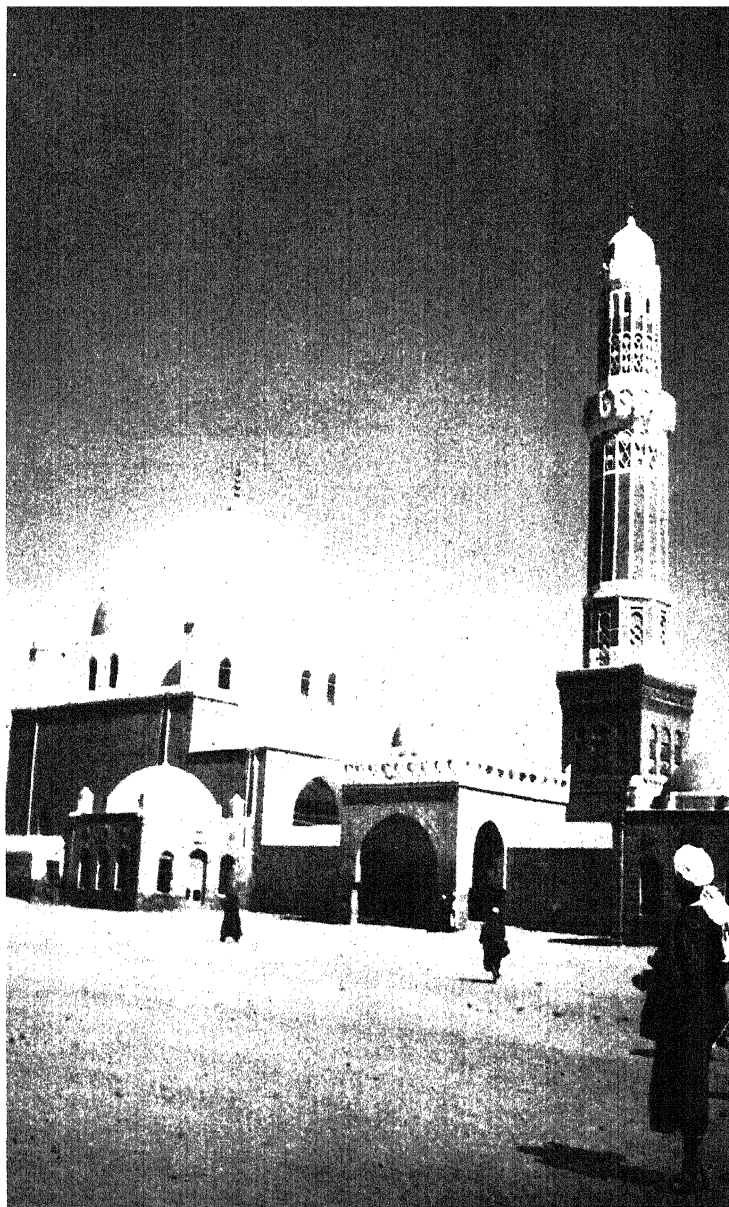
*The isolated watch tower of Habab in upper Yemen.*

*Through this elaborate and ancient gate weary caravans enter San'a at sunset.*





*San'a in Yemen.*



*The white-domed mosque of San'a, Yemen.*

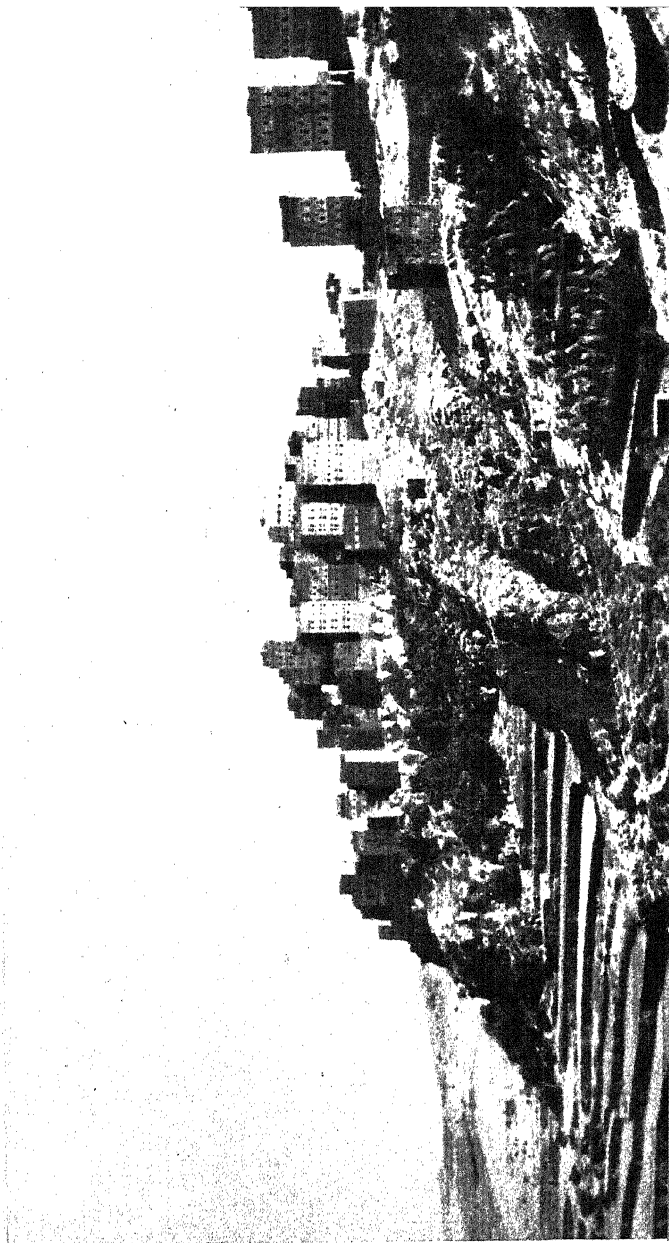


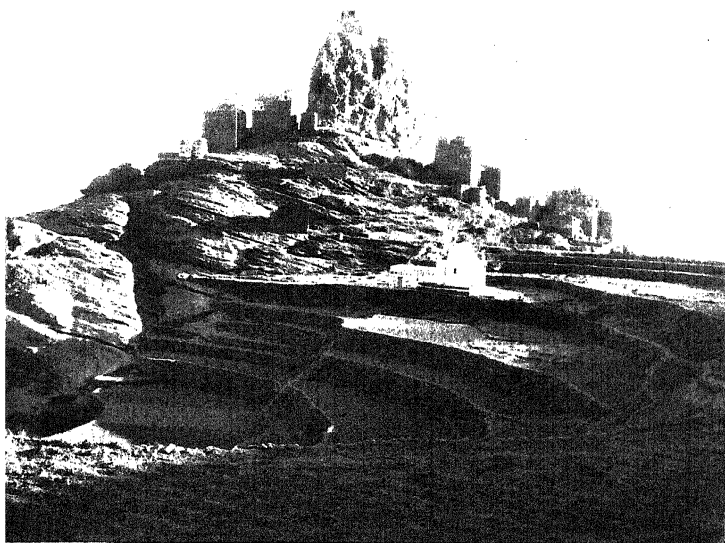
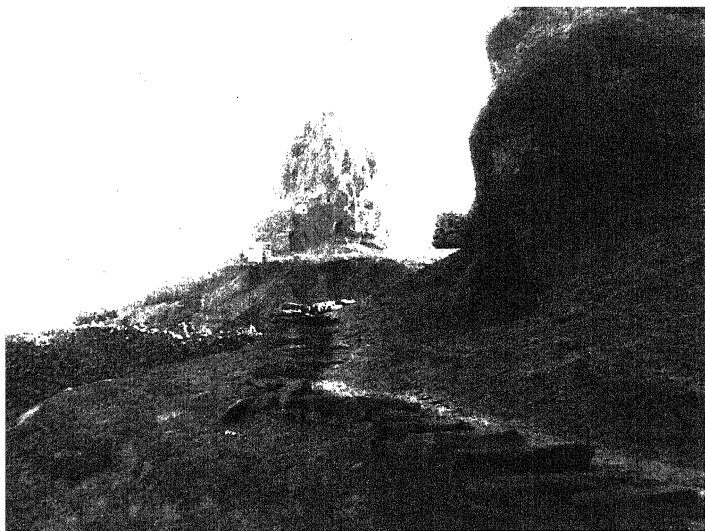
bove) The palace of the Imam, the  
al ruler, in San'a.

(Below) A street at the edge of Ho-  
deida.



*Menacha in Yemen stands out against the sky like a modern metropolis, compact with skyscrapers.*

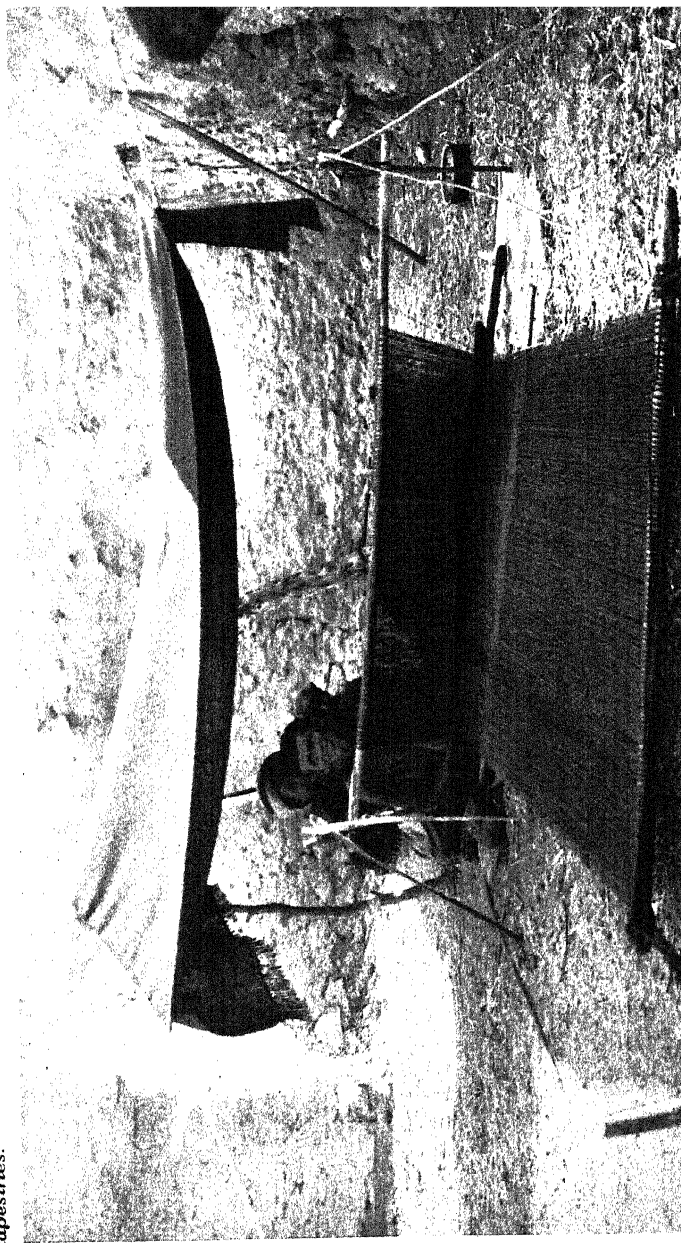


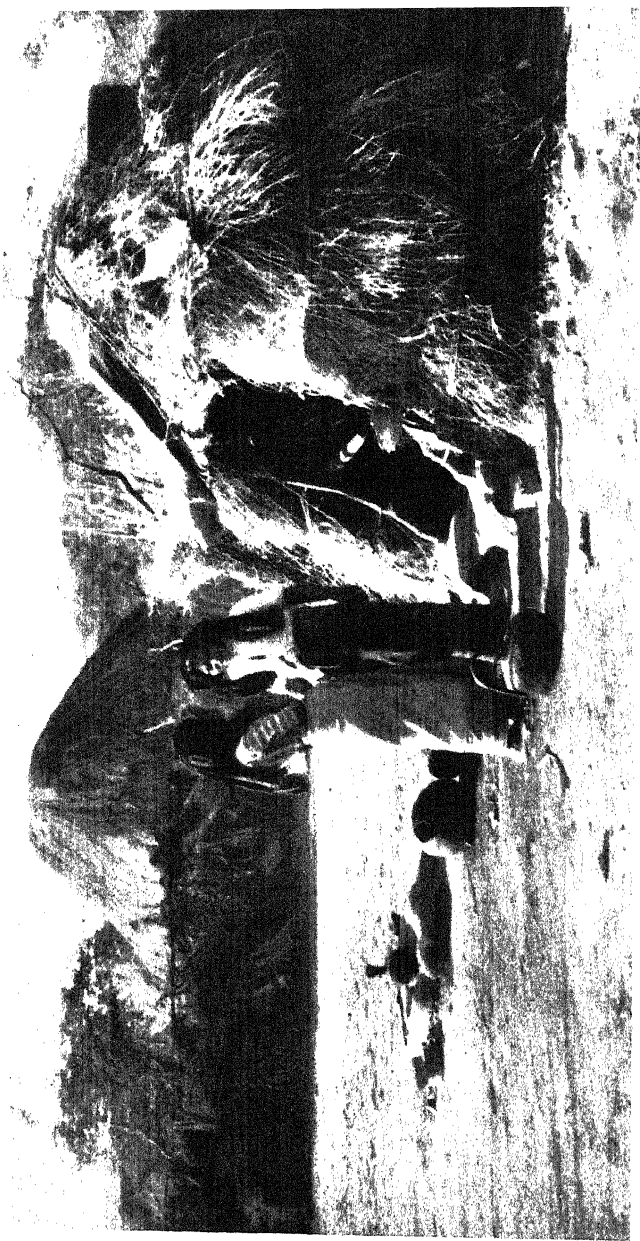


top of the rock is too precious to living for the dead to occupy any m there. The burial mosque in this naelite rock city, Harib, is in the ground on one of the terraces.

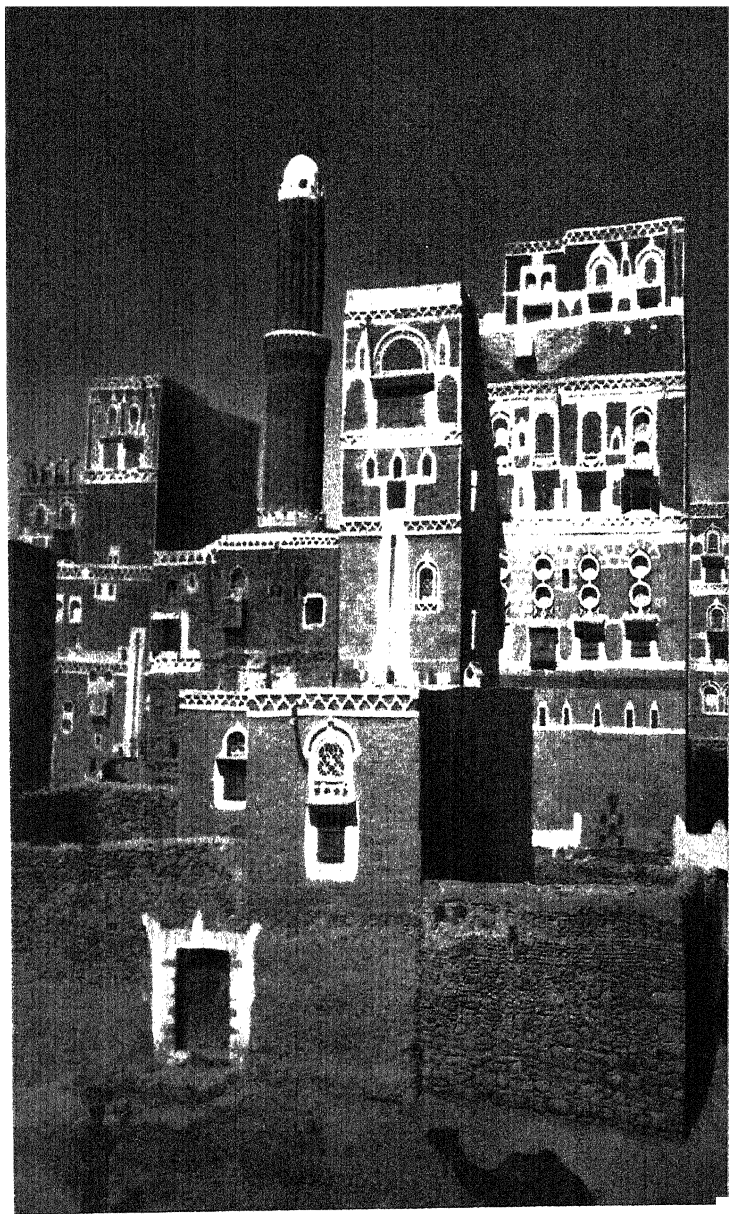
A town built in Yemen by the Ishmaelites, secure as the nest of an eagle at the summit of a tremendous rock.

*On crude, home-made looms like these, the people of Yemen weave their gorgeous tapestries.*

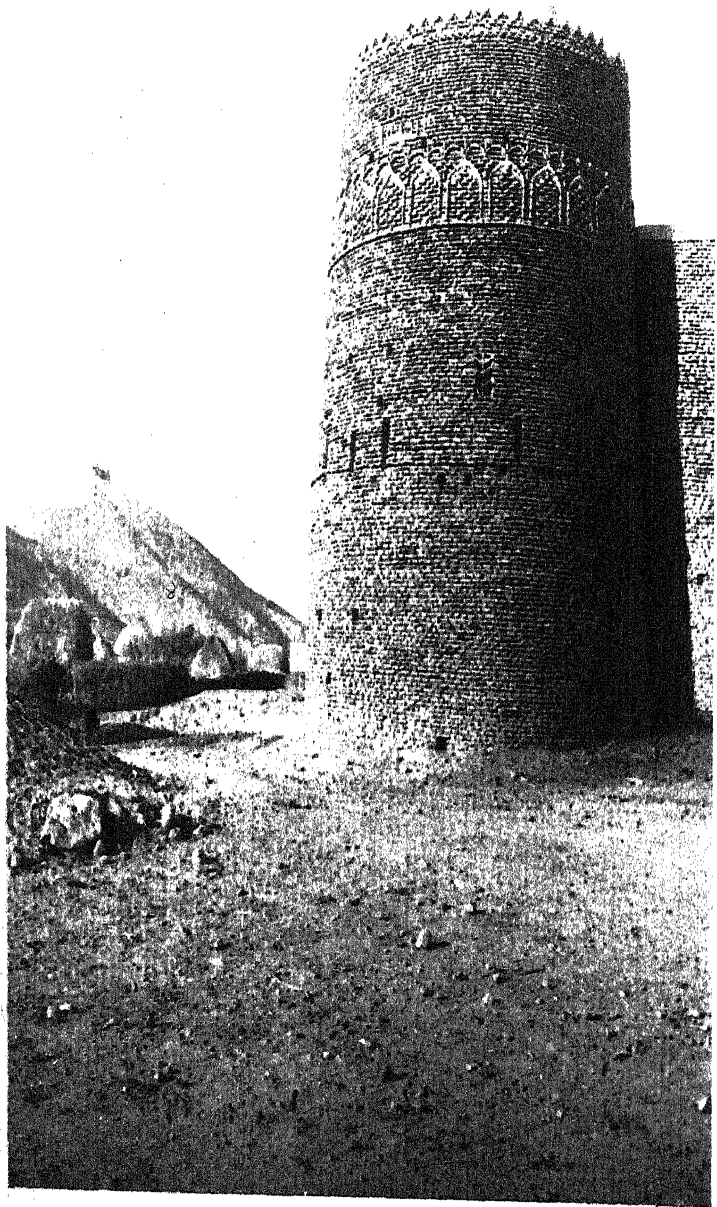




*When the Bedouins settle down they house themselves with only a little greater security than that offered by their desert tents. Here are primitive straw huts of the Tahama Bedouins with two of their women in the foreground.*

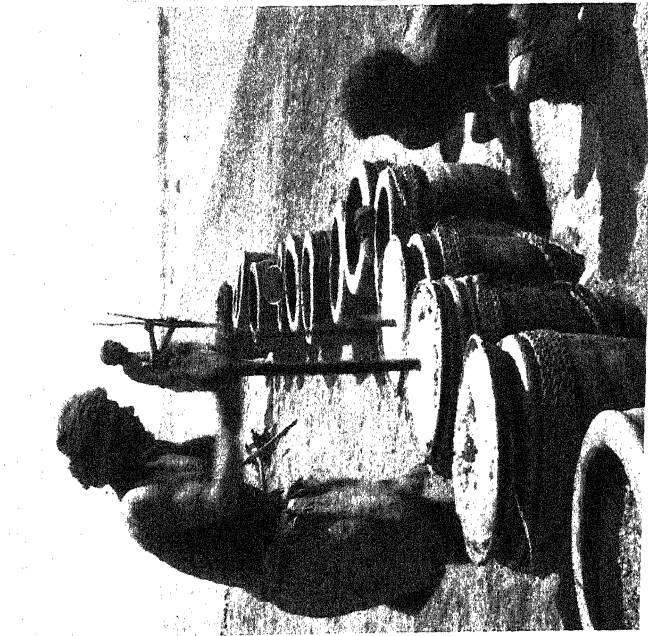


*Sana'a, Yemen.*



*The fortress of Badjil in Yemen.*

*From these vessels comes the gorgeous blue of Harib indigo.*



*A common soldier in Yemen pausing for refreshment.*



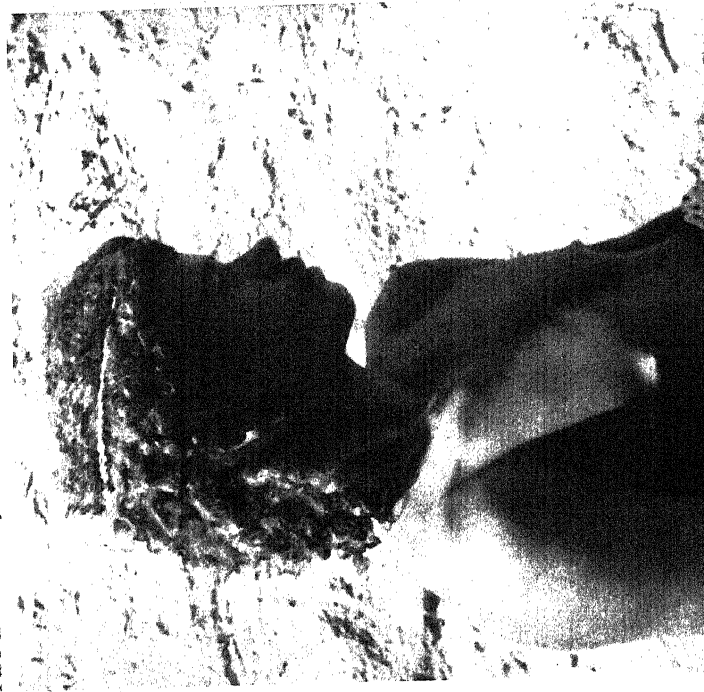




*At Harib in Yemen.*



*Two Bedouin boys of Harib.*





*Two Yemenite Bedouins.*

led down to the edge of the water, where a pious Musselman was going through the prescribed washing ceremony, which affects most parts of the body, while one of his co-religionists knelt nearby, cupped his hands, and drank of the precious liquid. Europeans would almost certainly have had serious scruples about drinking of that yellowish-brown, impure brew. But it apparently does the natives little harm.

We, too, rested there awhile. My companions and their mules sampled the horrible water; and a few words were exchanged with some Bedouins who were on their way from Hodeida. Then we pushed on. *Shedda, shedda, mi, mi, mi!*—with these words the mule drivers urged their animals forward.

We began steadily to climb. Late in the afternoon we reached a height from where we caught a final glimpse of San'a. A thunderstorm sweeping round the Jebel Nukum, which is near the city, enlivened the picture. At that time of the year showers of rain are not uncommon. Lying in a garden of fertile green, the old city, the holy city, with its palaces and high domed mosques, has triumphed over all storms, and has survived the ravages of time. Various civilisations, religions and traditions have flourished there, and some of them have passed to their doom, but the city goes on.

We had left the fertile plains and had entered a barren mountainous tract. Only in the lowest valleys were there patches of green, which, as an Arab poet might say, "were like tattoo marks on the earth's countenance." We marched on the old, well-trodden road, along which numerous caravans proceeded to the accompaniment of the soft jingling bell of the leading animal and the sing-

song of the Bedouins. The road, which was built by the Turks for military purposes, came to a sudden end at Metne.

It was evening by the time we reached Metne. The name must have had a special significance to the Turkish soldiers, for Metne was the last station on their death-bringing march from Hodeida to the Capital of Yemen. When the Turkish battalions—or what there was left of them after their march through the heat and fevers of the lowlands, and through the ravines and deep valleys of the mountains—when the few reached Metne, how their shouts of joy must have filled the air! For San'a, the long-desired goal, lay but a few hours away. More often than not the Turkish armies met with a very similar fate to that which overcame the Roman Legions, who came from the north to bring Southern Arabia to subjection. In the Yemen deserts they perished by the thousand, and few remained to carry the evil tidings back to Rome.

At Metne we stayed the night in one of the usual caravan-series, *Moqhaya* as they are called, which take the place of hotels and are found everywhere on the principal routes of travel. Generally they are rough stone houses, in which men and beasts sleep together in the ground-floor rooms. There is usually a small room with a minute window on the first floor, for the use of privileged travellers, but that, too, is without a vestige of furniture. There, with my soldiers, who not for one moment left my side, I was able to make myself fairly comfortable. The landlord placed an open, metal brasier in the room, but that was all that he had to offer. We had

to make our own tea; and food, of course, all travellers carry with them.

Boan, a place which we reached on the next day, is remarkable for the fact that although it is a market it has no permanent inhabitants. Sellers and purchasers come twice a week from the surrounding districts with their goods and livestock, and live temporarily in the primitive stone houses on the mountain slopes. When the market is over, the place again stays deserted for several days.

From Boan our way ascended steeply along a difficult mountain path, and we reached Suk el Chamis at about noon. On my first journey to San'a the postmaster of Suk el Chamis and myself had established a slight relationship.

Between Hodeida and San'a there is telegraphic communication which was established by the Turks and has since been maintained in service. In Suk el Chamis there is an intermediate telegraph office. The single living room which is occupied by the operator contains a wooden box with a morse-tapper, in lieu of a writing desk. Arriving late from Hodeida, I stayed as the guest of this high official—and, by the way, as a paying guest. The postmaster, a tall, lean man, his features distorted from long addiction to the kat habit, delivered me a lengthy and flowery speech to the effect that I was by all means to send a telegram to the Imâm; the custom of the country demanded it. Moreover, the Imâm would, in that case, be certain to send a car to meet me.

Actually he was the possessor of an aged Ford, which was frequently placed at the disposal of distinguished visitors to help them over the last part of their journey.

Furthermore, the whole telegram was only to cost four Maria-Theresa dollars.

Knowing even less of local customs than I do now, I took his advice. As might have been expected, no Ford came to meet me, and I strongly doubt that the telegram ever reached the Imâm. Incidentally, I learned later that the total cost of the message should have been quarter of a dollar; so the rest of the sum found its way into the operator's pocket. Well, there is no need to take the tragic view of such incidents, and they happen in Yemen as well as in other Oriental parts (and I do not wish to mention specifically any particular country). But I could not resist the temptation, on my return from San'a as "friend of the Imâm," to put a little fear into the heart of that old kat addict, by telling him that he would lose his job if he continued to play that sort of trick on unsuspecting strangers.

In English Suk el Chamis means "Sun Market." But there is little of the sunny nature in its wretched stone and clay dwellings. And, furthermore, it is so cool that one might be in a northern clime. The local inhabitants and the Bedouins for the most part wear long sheepskin cloaks, with the wool on the inside, and the hide, originally yellow, is turned a dark brown by the sun. It is curious to see the local caravan drivers as they pass wrapped in their furs and often carrying an oil lamp in their hands for use when they camp at night.

Suk el Chamis lies at an altitude of approximately 2,800 metres, that is nearly as high as the highest peak in the Bavarian Alps, the Zugspitze. When we reached the highest point, and I turned round to look behind me, astonishment at what I saw almost took my breath away.

The scene was as if some giant with a huge hammer had struck out, to left and right, and had left behind him a trail of peaks, rocks, ravines and boulders of every shape, sort and size imaginable. Nowhere have I seen a more impenetrable, forbidding region than that which lies on the main route to the interior of Yemen.

Even more amazing, if possible, are the sharp contrasts which appear almost at every turn. At Suk el Chamis the mountain wall descends abruptly for several thousands of feet. And while, here, the air is chilly, and the people go about wrapped in furs, down in the valley immediately below us the air is unbearably hot, and the valley itself is filled with a luxuriant, tropical vegetation. But on the other side the mountain wall ascends again just as abruptly and reaches a height of nearly three thousand metres; and high up, on a narrow *Grat*, can be seen Menacha, the most important place situated on the San'a-Hodeida route. This deep cutting between giant masses of rock brought disaster to the Turks, who perished here by the thousand. No foe, be he equipped with the most modern weapons of war, can pass through if the mountaineers are not disposed to let him. Nature itself seems to forbid entry into the Forbidden Land.

In the afternoon we began to climb down, step by step, as if we were descending into a giant amphitheatre. That time is always chosen for the descent, for then the sun is not quite so fierce and the sudden change from cold to stifling heat is not so noticeable. The vegetation and life of this "Valley of Death" grew more luxuriant at every step. Plants and trees of every kind grew in abundance. Birds of gay plumage flew about us; parrots

screeched; and monkeys watched us curiously as we passed.

In the evening we reached Mefhak, in the hollow of the valley. The place consists of an old castle, of which there are many dotted over different parts of the country, and a much visited caravansary, in which we spent the night.

It took us a whole day to climb to three thousand metres and reach Menacha. A magnificent road, impracticable for motors, however, wound its tortuous way up the steep side of the mountain wall. When we arrived in Menacha we found all the streets filled with resting caravans. Bales and boxes were lying everywhere, making it almost impossible for us to pass, and the whole time we heard the sharp, deep-throated sound "Sh! sh!" with which the Bedouins command their camels to kneel down. The caravansaries, too, were filled to capacity, and there was a long search before my soldiers found a private house in which our small troop could pass the night.

In the previous year, when I was journeying to San'a along the same route, but in the reverse direction, I stayed in Menacha as "the Imâm's guest", and was received by the Governor of the town and taken by him to a house set aside for the use of royal guests.



## XII.

### The Jebel Harraz and the Tahama

MENACHA lies on a narrow *Grat* between two high masses of mountains. Precipices yawn on both sides of the narrow city. Menacha is a fortified town, very favoured by Nature, and who holds it is in a position to decide who shall and who shall not enter Yemen. The Imâm has made certain of this door to his realm by quartering a big garrison there and by erecting a citadel which commands all approaches.

The mountain masses at both ends of the *Grat* are steep-sided. Far away, on the highest point of one of the peaks, a small village of tall houses can be clearly distinguished. Its inhabitants seem to desire to emulate the eagle, and live between mountain and cloud.

Leaving Menacha on our way to the Red Sea we again met one of those curious contrasts which are typical of Yemen. After a short descent from the barren peaks, with their almost perpendicular sides, and from a wilderness of rocks and ravines, we suddenly saw before us a delightful, peaceful landscape of foothills. It was the Jebel Harraz, the most favoured part of "Favoured Arabia."

The country was one enormous garden, filled with the

scents of many species of flowers: mountain rose, wild lilac, balsam blossom and many others. Of the trees, the Love or Judas tree, so-called because Judas is said to have been hanged on a similar tree, and the *Jatropha* with its juicy fruit are worthy of mention.

Many varieties of birds exist in this lovely district, and great numbers of monkeys cause substantial damage to the crops. Most of them are of the baboon type, and travellers are advised to keep out of their way and resist the temptation to shoot them, for a shot would immediately make the man who fired it the center of a bombardment of stones hurled by invisible hands, and rapid flight alone would save him.

Leopards, too, are quite plentiful here. It is the only animal, by the way, which the Imâm allows to be shot. Snakes are not often met with, but on the other hand there are great numbers of exceedingly unpleasant scorpions and a large sort of centipede, very poisonous, which is greatly feared by Europeans. Curiously enough the Arabs call them the "Seven-and-seventy-feet"—in Arabic: *Um saba we sabain*.

Having marched for a whole day through this garden district, we arrived at the small place of Wussil, where we proposed to put up for the night, but we found its only house (which had a single small room) crowded with resting travellers. In the midst of a medley of men, animals and bales lay an Arab stricken with malaria.

In Menacha I had given the man some quinine, but the attack had since become worse. The room was pervaded with that horrible, acrid and penetrating odour of camels' dung, which the Arabs dry and use for fuel. In addition to that, they prefer to close all doors and win-

dows at night; and despite these flagrant breaches of the rules of health seem to suffer little. In this atmosphere they sleep soundly, and not even the row caused by arriving and departing caravans is capable of disturbing their slumber.

But it was too much for me: I preferred to erect my camp-bed outside and sleep in the open. This decision caused great embarrassment to my soldiers, who had received strict orders not to lose sight of me for a single minute; apart from that, they regarded my determination to sleep in the open as a sign of madness. It is perfectly true, of course, that a tropical climate thins the blood, and the natives suffer considerably in the night air. And even Europeans, in time, experience the same discomfort.

I would not be persuaded to change my mind, despite the earnest representations of my companions. Finally one of the soldiers came to me and advised that sleeping in the open was too dangerous. The leopards would certainly pay me a visit, and, moreover, large snakes had been seen in the vicinity. When he saw that I was not to be dissuaded, the alarmed soldier prayed to Allah for a way out of the difficulty. After that he made me repeat several times a certain formula and then wrote something on a piece of paper which I was to carry during the night. It was a charm to protect me from wild animals. I have kept the piece of paper as a souvenir; but I was never able to understand the significance of the formula.

However, the soldier found me on the following morning safe and sound, and in the midst of a peaceful slumber. He excitedly told me that a misfortune had occurred. The mule which belonged to the Arab suffering

from malaria had strayed from the rest of the animals and had toppled over a precipice sixty feet high. It was a lucky thing for his owner that he was not in the saddle at the time. The animal turned several somersaults before coming to rest, but, remarkable as it may seem, suffered little injury. Perhaps his careful master had hung one of those magic charms round his neck?

The route, which now took us more and more into the plains, was the worst that I had so far experienced. The road descended in steep spirals, and looked as if great rocks had been exploded, at intervals of every thirty feet, and the broken rock scattered over the roadway.

To have to ride a mule over such stretches is a nerve-racking experience, for these animals, in Yemen at least, possess strange and uncertain tempers. In the first place, they exhibit a preference for striding along the outside edge of mountain paths, and neither gentle persuasion, nor vigorous application of the "aids," nor sharp cuts with the whip will make them alter direction. As the going is so loose it not infrequently happens that the mule slips, fails to recover, and rolls over the precipice. Sometimes they turn "nappy," and decide that it is time that the man in the saddle left that position and did some walking. Having thus decided, they suddenly stick their toes into the ground, and the rider, if he is not ready for it, takes a "voluntary" and bites the earth hard. And they usually select as the scene for this manoeuvre a place where the precipice yawns wider than usual. For some strange reason they have a real dislike for going downhill, although it takes less out of them than a climb. They show their unwillingness in many ways, by stumbling

intentionally and by jibbing and shying; and when anything of that sort occurs, the wise rider decides that discretion is the better part of valour, gets out of the saddle, and leads the animal by the bridle. The mule then ambles after him as quietly as any old donkey.

At Hadjele, where we halted to rest, we had gained the last of the foothills. The place was almost completely destroyed in the fighting of 1921 for possession of the coastal district. And the inhabitants of plains are now so degenerate that it is extremely unlikely that it will be built up again.

I would much have liked to have paid a visit to the Amel of Hadjele, who had given me such a kindly reception on my first journey to San'a. On that occasion I made him the present of a cold roast chicken which I had brought with me from Hodeida, and very delighted he was with it, too, for the countryside here begins to get poor. My guard, however, would not give me permission to pay this call. I was still regarded as a suspicious European, and if I were allowed to talk to a high servant of the King the country might be endangered.

Leaving the favoured highlands of Yemen for the plains is rather like leaving Switzerland and suddenly finding oneself planted in the middle of the Sahara. It is one of those clashing contrasts which are met with everywhere in the land. The coastal plain, which forms a strip of land about fifty miles wide, on the average, which divides the mountains from the sea, is called the Tahama.

The name is formed from the Arabic root "thm", which implies great heat and malodours; and that is saying a lot. According to Edward Glaser, who is known for

his valuable collection of Sheban inscriptions, this strip of coast land is formed principally from coral reefs, and was at one time, like the rest of the Arabian Red Sea coast, covered by the sea.

The Tahama is a flat plain with sparse vegetation and very little grazing for the cattle. In less arid parts of the plain a small quantity of *Durrha*, a kind of millet, is cultivated. The palms which grow there are wretched specimens. Tahama, too, is notorious for its frightful heat. Throughout the day the thermometer stands at well over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, and even the Bedouins, who are used to most conditions, will not attempt to travel in this veritable hell until after sunset.

In the rainy season, in the months of January and February, the thermometer sinks to an average of forty odd degrees Fahrenheit, which is still fairly warm, and then the natives shiver from the cold.

The well water, what there is of it, is very saline, and Europeans find it undrinkable. The whole of the drinking water for the harbour of Hodeida has to be carried on the backs of donkeys from the fifty-mile-distant mountains. The Tahama has the most unhealthy climate in the whole of Arabia; it is a breeding ground for a very severe form of malaria, which is gradually killing off the local population. The Italian doctors in Hodeida have not been able to do much to combat the disease. Quinine is dear, and the Imâm has not a very high opinion of European products; nor, for that matter, does he believe very much in the effect of medicines.

Here nothing is to be seen of the rich culture of the highlands; the proud, fortified cities are far off. The villages consist of miserable straw huts, shaped like bee-

baskets, and their appearance is typically African. And the natives, in contrast to those of the highlands, have coal black skins and a high percentage of negro blood.

On this journey I had particular occasion to take notice of the unpleasantness of the Tahama. My strength was rapidly failing, and the strenuous crossing of the Ruba al Khali and the confinement which followed it had worn me to a shred. When I left Hodeida I weighed less than a hundred pounds.

Obal, a small village of straw huts, was the place at which it was arranged for the car from San'a to meet us and pick me up. A temporary straw roof was erected between two huts. Under this poor shelter I lay through the day, hardly having the strength to move out of the way of the small sunrays which penetrated through cracks in the roof. But at every sound I jumped to my feet, in the hope that it heralded the arrival of the long-prayed-for car which was to rescue me from the heat. However, I had to wait two whole days.

This part of the Tahama is peopled by the dark skinned Zaramiqs, whose tribe inhabits an area stretching from Beit el Fakih to Zebid. They are a good-natured, hospitable people for the most part, with no fanatical prejudice against foreigners, who love their poverty-stricken, unhealthy country, and who fight bravely and obstinately for their freedom. It cost the Imâm great efforts to subject them, and they are forever revolting against his rule. In consequence these unfortunate Zaramiqs are constantly being harassed by the King's soldiers, who commandeer what cattle they own and confiscate their huts. In the prison at Hodeida I saw four hundred Zaramiqs, men and children, the inhabitants of

one village, who were fettered with heavy chains. A detachment of soldiers had been quartered on their village and had so ill-treated the natives that they rose up one night and killed every man of them.

Early on the third day the native inhabitants were treated to an unusual sight. The overdue car arrived—unfortunately, very full. In addition to Herr Hansen, a merchant, a relation of the Imâm, was one of the occupants; and the place beside the driver was filled by the “waterman.” No Arab driver sets out without one of these assistants at his side, whose chief job it is to jump out at frequent intervals and pour water over the radiator. Apparently, too, motoring in Arabia is a tiring business, since the Imâm’s relative, for example, was in an appalling state, and I had to probe into my medicine chest for something to freshen him up.

But neither drugs, nor the repeated requests of Herr Hansen would move the driver to take any of us with him. The engine had already been on strike on more than one occasion during the journey, and the driver stated that he would consider himself very lucky if he got as far as Hodeida. Moreover, he declared, the car wasn’t built to carry big loads. On the other hand, we pointed out to him, it was only a matter of some forty miles to the coast, and the road was downhill all the way.

As has already been mentioned, the road from San’a describes a big U to the south, and then joins the pass road from Aden—the direct way over the mountains being impracticable for motors.



A few remarks about the road may be of some interest to future travellers. From San'a the road turns to the south and passes for some thirty-five miles over a flat high plateau, past the Beni Moslem (a hill standing a thousand feet higher than the plateau), to Maber. The plateau here is scattered with small ridges of hills, is well cultivated and thickly populated. From Maber the way proceeds another fourteen miles to the south and then reaches the end of the plateau; then there is a steep descent down the side of the Jebel Masna, and the place of Masna, some three thousand, six hundred feet lower, is reached after about three and a half miles. Another ten miles through the valley, still to the south, brings one to Medina el Abiad, where the road turns west-north-west and passes through the district of Anis. Near Medina el Abiad is the spa, Hamam, with its famous hot springs, to which the Imâm is a frequent visitor. Having driven some thirty or thirty-five miles in a westerly direction, one finds the way gradually turns north; and the rest of the road as far as Obal is through a series of wadis.

After a great deal of argument the chauffeur at length weakened and agreed to take me, at all events, as far as Hodeida. Quickly my baggage was tied on, and I squeezed myself into the car, and we were ready to move away. Then, at the last moment, the soldiers made difficulties: in no circumstances, said they, might I travel without escort, and at least one of them would have to come with me. But with the best of wills, that was quite impossible; another addition to the freight, and the old crock would have broken down for a certainty. For half an hour, amidst much shouting and gesticulation, an ar-

gument proceeded. But at the end of it I was hauled out of the car and planted by the wayside in the middle of my luggage; and the car drove off, leaving me to watch its departure with sad eyes.

Sick at heart, I crawled back to the shade of my straw roof, and I had to stay there in the heat for the rest of the day. When evening approached we continued our journey, in the way to which we had grown accustomed.

### XIII.

#### Gaining the Red Sea

DARKNESS lay over the desert. The night seemed unbearably long when one was completely exhausted and one's legs clung to the sides of a mule which plodded monotonously forward, finding its own way through the darkness. The moon had not yet risen, and the mountains, whose contours were just visible, gradually receded into the background, until practically all that remained of them was the knowledge that they were somewhere behind us. The deep stillness which surrounded us was occasionally broken by the call of some night bird. We crossed the Wadi Siham and, soon after, the Wadi Hajile, which, a rarity in the Arabian summer, actually held water. At midnight we came to Behei, a village of huts, and after a short rest continued on our way.

Not long before dawn we reached the goal of our night march: Badjil, one of the few places of any size in the Tahama, a well attended market. We found lodgings in a straw hut which had four couches of palm straw; and I sank down exhausted, and immediately fell asleep. But the rest which I so badly needed was not granted. Cocks began to crow, bleating sheep threaded

their way between our beds, and the owners of the hut kindled a fire in the middle of the room which emitted fumes which nearly choked us.

My nerves at high-tension point, I jumped up from my couch and made a bold decision: with what money remained I would have a car sent from Hodeida to meet me. The postmaster had to be fetched out of bed, and apparently he slept better than I, for some time elapsed before he put in an appearance. The telegram was addressed to Prince Hussein, who as Governor of the Tahama and as a son of the Imâm had a practical monopoly over the few cars which Hodeida possessed. The experiment was a success. Some time later the answer came that a car was being sent. In addition, I learnt that a steamer was lying in the harbour of Hodeida; if I hurried I could just catch it.

I took a final walk through the little town. Badjil is an ungainly fortress with stout, giant watch-towers and a high wall built of clay bricks. This strongly garrisoned place is the Imâm's farthest outpost in the Tahama. In the market I came across some acquaintances I had made during my first journey: two soldiers whom I had photographed in San'a, and my old mule driver, Meluki, whose joy at seeing me again was so great that he very nearly embraced me.

At one o'clock an ancient Ford groaned its way into the town. At the expense of some trouble my luggage was stowed away; I took my seat, spread myself out happily, and waited for the car to start. But, alas! the chauffeur and his assistant took up all the room in the front seat, and there was only space for one man to ride beside

me. However, there were three soldiers with me, and all wanted to taste the novelty of travel by motor.

A genuine Arabian comedy was then played out. As soon as one of the soldiers had wormed his way into the car, the others raised a wild shout, and hauled him out again. During the scuffle a second man seized the first opportunity of climbing into the car. Thereupon the first man allied himself with the third, and both made a rush at the other, and dragged him out. The third man suffered the same fate, when it came to his turn; and the whole performance was repeated—the row steadily growing worse as the engagement became more heated. This scene continued for some time, to the undisguised satisfaction of the large crowd which had gathered to watch the fun.

I am quite willing to believe that we might have been there to this day, had not the affair become a bit too much for the driver. He pressed his foot hard on to the accelerator, just at the moment when one of the soldiers had won his way into the seat, while his assistant, the "waterman", neatly knocked out the other two who were on the running board trying to haul their companion out. They fell heavily on to their backs in the sand.

We were off! Immediately we heard a fearful commotion, and, turning round, saw the two soldiers who had been left behind chasing after us, to take vengeance with drawn daggers. But they soon found that the pace was too hot for them, and gave up the unequal contest. What better example can we have of the driver's wisdom in never failing to take an assistant with him? But for him I might have missed my ride. But, unfortunately, we chose the wrong moment for our violent intervention,

and carried off the wrong man of my three guards, as will be seen presently.

After the ponderous stride of the camel and jolting pace of the mule, we drove off at a speed which seemed strangely fast to me. A burning wind swept our faces and pierced our skin like a thousand needles. But what did that matter, as long as I caught the steamer? For some thirty miles we drove through sand and desert scrub. Twice we passed human habitations, where stops were made to refill the radiator. That the old, asthmatic engine held out was indeed a miracle. But evidently Allah is graciously disposed to these clever inventions of man which find their way into his countries.

In the distance we saw a shimmering haze, from which, after a drive of about three hours, the tops of dazzling white towers could be seen. A heavy, salt sea air was wafted to us; we drove for a stretch along the coast; soon white house-fronts and palms appeared in view. We were at Hodeida on the Red Sea, which I had reached at last, after a journey of some twelve hundred miles across Southern Arabia, from coast to coast.

I went first of all to my old Greek friend Livierato, who had received me so hospitably on my first visit. The steamer was still at anchor in the harbour, but it was due to leave in about an hour. I had just enough time in which to put myself into reasonable order for my return to the Western world, and to pay my respects and at the same time take leave of my host. I then hurried to the quayside, accompanied by the inevitable guard, which by this time had dwindled into a single soldier.

But at the harbour entrance I was stopped. Where was the Imâm's exit visa, without which I could not

leave the country? It turned out that one of the soldiers whom we had left behind in Badjil had it. Excuses and requests were of no avail. The Imâm's orders were holy. With a sinking heart I watched the ship steam away to the north and disappear from sight. The next boat was in ten days' time. A prisoner again, and within sight of my final goal! However, I was allowed to stay in the Livierato house, but not to leave it without an escort.

On the following day the soldiers who had been left behind trotted into the city, having completely forgotten their annoyance, and brought the King's letter with them. In it was written that I was to leave Hodeida by the first ship. But Allah had decided otherwise.

Very few foreigners live in Hodeida; those who are there are Italians, Greeks or Russians. Soviet Russia, by the way, is busily cultivating commercial relations with Southern Arabia, and that large, though distant country seems to be the only one which the Imâm does not treat with constant suspicion.

Europeans have very little liberty of movement in Hodeida. The present governor of the coastal district, Prince Hussein, is the enemy of all foreigners, and he is continually introducing new decrees making their existence harder to bear. The European is forbidden to make excursions outside the city; he is forbidden to sail on the sea after sunset; and he is even forbidden to operate a gramophone.

The Arabs seem particularly shy of this mechanical musical instrument, for even Ibn Saud will not allow one to be played in his country, on religious grounds. The only recreation which is left to Europeans is a game on the tennis court; but even that is a doubtful pleasure,

both because the game is too vigorous for the climate and because there is always the chance that Prince Hussein will take it into his head to put an end to that.

The coffee business of Yemen is nowadays chiefly in the hands of Greek merchants. There are two big firms: the House of Livierato, which has been in existence since the opening of the Suez Canal, that is since the year 1869 (the concern owns a sorting and export business in Hodeida, as well as several depots on the African coast and in Abyssinia) and the firm of Athanassacopulo, whose head office is in Aden. Both these Greek merchant families treated me, an unknown German, with the most generous hospitality, and both helped me where they could.

Coffee was already known in Arabia in Mohammed's time, though it rarely reached Mecca from Yemen. The coffee bean itself the Arabs call "bun", while the beverage prepared from the bean or shell is known as "gachwa". Gachwa also is the name for grape or fruit juice, that is for alcohol. But the Koran forbids Mohammedans to drink alcohol, and particularly strict Moslems, who take the word "gachwa" literally, often decline to drink coffee. Stout volumes and lengthy poems have been written in the past to decide whether or not a Mohammedan should drink coffee. In most instances judgment has been pronounced in an affirmative sense, for the Arabs enjoy coffee just as much as any of the peoples of the Occident. The aromatic beverage is, after all, one of those things which people can in the long run do without. But argument, especially about religious questions, is a thing which the Arabs are passionately fond



of, and the results of their discussions have been set forth in many large volumes.

Many very remarkable, and to us, most unusual themes are frequently debated in that way. For instance, there is a long treatise, very skilfully and learnedly presented, on the subject: Does the Koran state or imply that it is permitted to kill a flea within the precincts of the Ka'aba in Mecca?

Yemen, with the old harbour city of Mocca (in Arabic: *Mocha*), is the birthplace of coffee. It is true that, to-day, the bulk of the world's coffee supply comes from South America, but those products are not to be compared with that which is grown in Southern Arabia for aroma and quality.

The highland district of Yemen is the only part of Arabia which enjoys rain, real rain, not during a particular period, but all the year round. Only in those circumstances is it possible to grow coffee. The plantations on the southern slopes of the Yemen mountains, at a height of nearly ten thousand feet, have been in existence for several hundred years. The best Arabian coffee is found in the district of San'a, at a height of seven thousand feet, and in the Jebel Harraz area. Harvesting is carried on all the year round, but the crops vary in quality; the best are harvested in the summer. The beans are packed in straw baskets and bales and taken on camel back through the Tahama to the harbour city of Hodeida on the Red Sea. Hodeida, not Mocca, which has given the name to the best coffee, is Yemen's export harbour for that product.

Even during the Turkish period and during the Great War Mocca was a flourishing city, the focus of the en-

tire trade of the country. But to-day its fresh water wells have dried up; most of its inhabitants have left; and its white houses and palaces lie at the mercy of the damp, salt sea air and of the desert sand. And so Hodeida remains the only useful harbour.

If you pass through the streets of Hodeida you hear at many places a curious scraping noise. It is caused by women who, with large, round straw plates, sift the dust from the coffee beans and sort out the bad ones. These women belong to the lowest caste, the *Chaddami*, they go unveiled, and although they are, if anything, handsomer than the Arab women, they are despised by the rest of the population. For a miserable wage, these *Chaddami* women, and the men, in the big coffee storehouses, sort the coffee into the various kinds—the crops from the Jebel Bora and the Jebel Rema are considered inferior—and pack the beans, according to size, into bales, each of which weighs 160 pounds. In a year Hodeida exports about eighty thousand of these bales. Most of them go to America, and the rest to Italy, France and Egypt, where the Arabian coffee is blended with other sorts. In England and Germany, on the other hand, nearly all the coffee used comes from America.

I lay on the roof of the Livierato coffee sorting house, which, incidentally, is the dwelling house, too. It was evening. The monotonous rattle and scraping of the coffee sorters had ceased, though the pungent odour of the coffee mats mounted to the roof. A salty, but never cool air came off the sea. We lazed peacefully in our deck-chairs; conversation was sparing. Hundreds and hundreds of bats flew their regular evening circuits round the housetop. I cast my mind back to my first visit to

Hodeida. Then, too, I had come from San'a and was waiting for a ship. But I was a free man, and the youthful Crown Prince, Seif el Islam Mohammed, a friend of the West, was then still living. A big fête was being held at the time, and I propose to describe something of it in the chapter which follows.

## XIV.

### The Fête in Hodeida

PRINCE SEIF EL ISLAM MOHAMMED, who later met with so tragic an end, was to enter Hodeida in a festive procession. I had already met the Prince in San'a, but as I returned to Hodeida before his arrival I was able to witness some of the preparations.

Leaving the Livierato house, I took a walk in the city, directing my way through a narrow street which leads to the sea. On the long, white sea front are the houses of the various merchants, the house occupied by the Russians, that of the representative of the Indian shipping company and the palace of the Amel of Hodeida. The palace is an imposing building, stands in a prominent position, and has a dome of the main entrance, beside which are two clay-built guard houses. The house, like all the others, is painted white, and can be seen far out at sea. Immediately behind the Amel's palace is the prison, which is always well filled with captured Zaramiqs, who are led out on to the beach in the evening. You can see them there hobbling about in their chains; in the prison, of course, there are no sanitary arrangements.

Hodeida consists of two entirely separate districts, the

city proper, with its permanent buildings, its houses and mosques, and the fisher village, which contains straw huts similar to those of the Tahama Bedouins. Fishing in the Red Sea is a very heartening business. If you walk along the shore in the morning you meet the fishermen as they return from the night's fishing, hauling their heavy catches from the boats. Fish of every shape and size are brought in, but sharks, also of all sizes, form the bulk of the catch. All along the Arabian coast the Bedouins have a fondness for shark meat. The fishermen carry their spoil from the sea on long poles over the shoulder; the bigger fish are carried on a pole between two men. Another big fish which is often caught in the Red Sea is the dangerous sword fish.

Between the city proper and the fisher village a broad street leads from the sea to the old city gate, and from there past buildings of various kinds to Prince Seif el Islam's house. The street had been transformed into a veritable triumphal route. Masts and arches of palm branches were everywhere, and the Yemen flag (a sword and three stars on a red background) was flown from almost every house.

The Prince entered the city at the time of the Selamlik, the big Friday parade. Soldiers, mounted and on foot, marched far into the Tahama to meet him, and bring him, mounted on a splendid grey horse, in triumph into the city. The soldiers sang their war songs and performed pantomimic dances round the Prince's horse; and at frequent intervals a forest of rifles would fly into the air, which the soldiers would catch dexterously as they fell.

Evening came. And it was one of those never-varying tropical nights with their clear, star-lit skies. But there was none of that freshness of the desert; the air was humid and sultry; and there was not the slightest suggestion of a breeze.

The big square outside the house of Seif el Islam, where an enormous crowd had gathered, was illuminated by torchlight. Soldiers arriving from a different part of the town danced their way to the square, and then went to the place which had been reserved for them. A big procession was formed by Arabs from the North-East; the many dows which had brought them from the Persian Gulf lay at anchor in the harbour. These Arabs were very dark skinned, a coarser type than the Yemenites, unattractive and of poorer physique than the local men, and were clad in loose-sleeved, long brown robes which hung down to their feet. They were carrying long sabres and executed extraordinary dances as they advanced on the square. Some of them, too, had shields, and exciting duels were enacted. One man, pretending to have been hit, sank on to his knees, rose again, and then fell flat. A third man stepped in front of him and defended his stricken comrade. All this took place in perfect dance rhythm, to the accompaniment of many drums.

The actual fête then began.

Chairs for the guests of honour were arranged in a long line, and in the centre was a big chair with a small table in front of it. Here Prince Seif el Islam Mohammed took his seat. He was dressed in a costly silk robe, and his turban had two flowing ends, the sign of his princely dignity. A tall negro servant held the "Sword of Islam," in a silver sheath, horizontally over his head.

The Omans opened the fête with a series of dances. Then came the soldiers, who sang one of their war songs and performed a kind of round dance. In the meanwhile the Zaramiqs had formed in a long line ready to take their turn. They wore only a loin-cloth, a silver arm band and a pointed straw hat with a silver ornament. The long line of Zaramiqs began a rhythmic dance. It consisted at first of a slight swaying of the trunk of the body; then they folded their arms, and the dance gradually grew more lively. The swaying greatly increased, and the dancers from time to time launched themselves into the air. The movements executed by these sturdy, brown bodies in the light of the torches were a very remarkable sight. The singing, too, had something uncommonly attractive about it. Over the whole scene hung an atmosphere of enchantment and, at the same time, of solemnity.

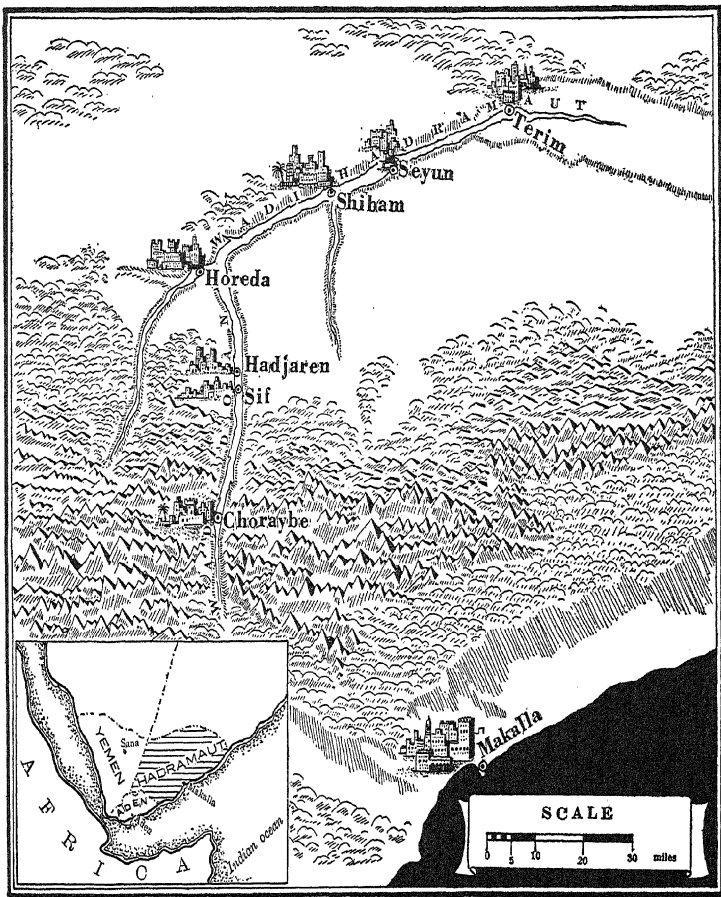
All notion of time seemed to fade away. One was caught in the fascination of that wonderful rhythm; to see these primitive men and their fine, uniform movements is a thing, which, once witnessed, will never be forgotten. But gradually the music died away; and the dancers left the square in the manner in which they arrived. Soon all that was left was a muffled sound of the drums and a buzzed sound of conversation which gradually grew weaker and weaker until it finally died away in the distance. The fête was over.

At the end of ten days the steamer put into the harbour. I was escorted to the quay by the heavily armed guard of honour which was composed of my three trusty soldiers. As soon as I set foot on the ship's gang-

way their task was ended, and I was free. The three men stood in line on the quayside and saluted—it was the final gesture of their strange, wonderful country which it had cost me so many long weeks to cross. It was a country which had held me in its charm, a country, moreover, which contained so much yet to be discovered. Discovery will have to wait until its walls of hostile aloofness have fallen down.

Soon that queer and fussy little vessel, the “Afrika” was under weigh, and land gradually receded. Finally the yellow strip of coastline with the white houses of the city disappeared in shimmering haze below the horizon, like a deceptive *Fata Morgana*. But reality lay well guarded in the rich spoil of films and photographs with which I now steered for home.













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